Dungeon®

ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

JULY/AUGUST 1994 ISSUE #48
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COVER: Peter Clarke provides us with a dragon's-eye view of Cloud City, starting point of the search for the "Sleeping Dragon."

Milestones

With this issue, we finish another year of publication, our eighth. (This magazine's first issue was published in September 1986.) I came on board with issue #4, so this is my 44th issue of DUNGEON® Adventures (a nice repetitive number). And in just a few months, we'll start work on our 50th issue! Thanks to everyone for making DUNGEON Adventures such a success.

We have a special goodie for you this issue: a full-color map, drawn by Michael Scott, for Chris Perkins's adventure "Them Apples." Although the text says that this is a giant's home, with an equivalent scale, we hope you find the map useful in other adventures. Just adjust the scale and it can be a human habitation as well.

In last issue's "Coming in Issue #48," we listed "All That Glitters," an AD&D® adventure for levels 9-12 by Lisa Smedman. During the editing phase, we came up with an even better name for this adventure. You'll find it on page 8, now titled "To Bite the Moon." We're sorry for any confusion this might cause.

I'd like to remind everyone that readers may now correspond with us and submit adventure proposals by electronic mail. You can reach us via the Internet at tsr.mags@genie.geis.com. If you subscribe to the GEnie information service, our email address is TSR.MAGS. If you'd like your email address published with your letter, please let us know. Otherwise, we will assume you want to keep it private.

And last, but not least, don't forget to check out the third DUNGEON Magazine index, on page 64. This index covers adventures in issues #37-#48. Previous indexes appeared in issues #24 and #36.

Barbara G. Young

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EDITOR: Barbara G. Young
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Wolfgang H. Baur

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Dale A. Donovan
ART DIRECTOR: Larry W. Smith
CARTOGRAPHER: Diesel
TYPESETTING: Tracey Isler
SUBSCRIPTIONS: Janet L. Winters
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Watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you, because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places. Those who don't believe in magic will never find it.

Roald Dahl, *The Minpins*

LETTERS

Please let us know what you think about this issue of DUNGEON® Adventures. Although we can't print every letter we receive, we read them all and seriously consider your comments and suggestions. Write to: Letters, DUNGEON Adventures, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147 U.S.A. You can also contact us by sending electronic mail to tsr.mags@genie.geis.com. We will not publish your address (regular or email) unless you specifically request us to do so.

Weasel Quandary

I was enthralled by the wonderful blend of adventures in issue #47. I was particularly taken with "Fraggart's Contraption" and "When the Light Goes Out." Hats off to David Wright as well; I intend to place his "Shades of Darkness" into my existing campaign.

David Day's artwork for my adventure "Quelkin's Quandary" was perfect. Beautiful, in fact. His rendering of Rastull Fizzlewand and his enlarged weasel familiar was just how I pictured them. However, I was dismayed to see that T'Bubnik's stats were altered to conform to the rules governing Rastull's *enlarge* spell. Granted the spell can increase T'Bubnik's size by only 60% (10% per level), but a weasel that size is hardly a monstrous challenge for the PCs—and certainly not the beady-eyed behemoth depicted on page 18!

The fault is mine, really. I should've read the description of the *enlarge* spell more carefully. What's the point in enlarging T'Bubnik by 60% its normal size when all that does is increase its damage by 1 hp? My suggestion is this:

Give Rastull a potion of *growth* instead of an *enlarge* spell. When intruders are detected, the evil wizard hands the bottle to T'Bubnik. The weasel spends one round sucking on the bottle's rubber "nipple." The following round, it transforms into a giant weasel of formidable size. (See the *Monstrous Compendium®* supplement for giant weasel statistics.) The potion's effect lasts 10d4 +4 turns, and the DM may decide how many doses T'Bubnik's "baby bottle" holds (up to four).

When I playtested this module several years ago, my PCs were taken aback by Rastull's giant weasel familiar (much like the fighter depicted in Mr. Day's artwork). In fact, T'Bubnik was personally responsible for mutilating the party mage. The point is, I would never allow the rules governing spells to restrict the drama and flow of creativity within an adventure. We DMs and module designers walk a fine line between maintaining rule integrity and creating truly innovative and memorable encounters to entertain and challenge our players. If an *enlarge* spell won't do, then something else will.

Christopher Perkins
Georgetown, Ontario

The editors apologize for any confusion about T'Bubnik's size in Chris's adventure. We tried to fix a rules problem at the expense of the story and got caught!

Reality is Boring

I am writing a reply to Thomas Overton's letter in issue #47 about excessive role-playing. It talked about "The insistence among many gamers to stress role-playing above all else," and that "Nowadays, people want to role-play every last thing their characters do . . ."

I would like to say that I totally agree with this letter. When I DM, I try to make role-playing an issue but not the major one. Adventuring and making the players think up interesting solutions to problems is the fun of the game, not trying to play every little mundane thing that your characters would do in real life. The AD&D® game is not about real life, it is about having a good time.

Sometimes when I play (my friends and I switch roles often), my character goes into a store to buy rations, and I have to go through a half-hour discussion about what kind of food I am supposed to get! If I ask for rations, my DM thinks of the most disgusting thing imaginable to eat and then tells me that's what "rations" are available. So I have to think of what kind of animal lives in that climate, if my character is a gourmet or not, and what kind of food he likes. By the time I am done, time has passed in a shop getting food, instead of outside playing adventures.

Further difficulties are encountered when my character has to eat the food. I have to decide what fraction of my rack of lamb I want to eat then, and how much to save for the rest of the journey. I admit that this is like real life. But this part of real life is not fun or interesting to play. The great thing about the AD&D game is that you can skip over the tedious and mundane parts of life. Reality is boring enough, so why repeat the boring parts for fun?

Noah Keating
New York, New York

A Fiendish Contraption

I wholly enjoyed Willie Walsh's latest (and it *was* late) module, "Fraggart's Contraption" [issue #47]. Though at first I was hesitant about introducing such a modern item into my campaign, I soon found several ways to insure that my campaign would not be disrupted or

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my players become too powerful.

First, with no means of repairing Fraggart's contraption (except Fraggart himself), the PC's will have a hard time keeping the machine in working order.

Second, the cost of running the machine is sure to give the PC's second thoughts about using it. At about 180 gold pieces per day to run, plus the adventure involved in collecting the unusual materials required to manufacture its fuel, Fraggart's contrivance is sure to become a more of a headache to the characters than an advantage (remember that each use of a wand burns a half day's worth of fuel).

Third, consider for a moment the reaction of the townspeople when the PCs come lumbering into their city in a noisy contraption. Magic itself is hard to believe, but when a bunch of adventurers drive into town in a horseless, spell-shooting carriage, frightening horses and running into things, people are sure to become hostile. Local businesses may refuse to deal with the PCs, fearing their contrivance may bring a curse upon their village.

The key to running the module "Fraggart's Contraption" is to remember that you are in control. If giving it to the PC's makes them too powerful or the vehicle disrupts your campaign, you have the ability to make owning it a living hell. Don't take the machine away from the characters, but instead make them want to give it back to you. Imagine trying to find a parking space for your car in a village of the Middle Ages. Little things like these are what will make Frank the Fighter decide to run Fraggart's contraption off a cliff.

Chris Donathan II
42236 Montroy
Sterling Heights, MI 48313

Great minds think alike. Everyone who enjoyed "Fraggart's Contraption" is encouraged to read Roger Moore's short story, "A Dragon to the Core" in The Dragons of Krynn *(TSR, 1994). Heck, read all the stories. Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman edited this anthology and picked out some wonderful tales.*

A Change of Physics

This letter is in response to Tim Scott, who was worried about the introduction of steam engines in the AD&D game through the adventure "Train of Events" (issue #44).

I understand and share Mr. Scott's worries. If you want to know what happened when steam power was introduced, take a look at England during the Industrial Revolution. However, the adventure can be included in an ongoing campaign by various means.

If you like steam but don't want everybody to get hold of it, change your campaign world's physics. In the case of "Train of Events," change the properties of water so that it takes magical fire to turn it into steam, and let the dwarves of the Targhazarn Mining Company have devised a way to put a fire elemental into one of their contraptions. This would also make a nice link to the water elemental-powered boats in "Moving Day" (issue #43). If you want to avoid all that hassle, have the dwarves find a way to control rocks and make some huge, heavy wheels with enough momentum to pull a train (a wheel-shaped stone golem, perhaps?).

I guess that, in short, this letter is yet another rephrasing of the old DM's maxim, "If you don't like it, change it!".

Soren Thustrup
Copenhagen, Denmark

Advice for Beginners

Just a short letter to let you and the readers know about a rather unusual gaming group. I am 33 years old, male, with nearly eight years' experience DMing to my credit. Recently, I managed to get together a group of four people to play the AD&D game, in addition to my regular group.

While it has been a short-lived experiment, for we had only three sessions due my many other commitments, there were two unusual things about this mob. The first is that our games took place immediately after we had finished work on Friday afternoon. The second is that all the players were female. They ranged in age from early twenties to late thirties.

I used two adventures from DUNGEON. The first was "A Wizard's Fate" [issue #37], and the second was loosely based on "Isle of the Abbey" [issue #34], though set in a tarn some 500 miles from the coast of my campaign setting of Marlikosa.

Two players had no role-playing experience, one had played the "Eye of the Beholder" series, and the fourth had played the AD&D game for a short while in her university days in Britain, about ten years ago. Despite these apparent shortcomings, they acquitted themselves very well. Though I helped them a bit (very discreetly), they still came up with good ideas. The group showed intelligence, initiative, and enthusiasm—all the qualities of superb players in the making, and it has been a rare privilege to foster this development.

I think it is the responsibility of game masters of any role-playing game to come up with good scenarios (DUNGEON magazine is of inestimable help to those like me who also have other important commitments) and to encourage their players to get the most of what these open-ended games have to offer.

This is also what Matt Mulcahy (DUNGEON #44) has to remember. He even says that his group is still eager for more. Mate, if you're still running the group, *keep it going!* Emett Barfield III (DUNGEON #46) is 100% correct—hang on to that player with the "Oh, I wonder what is in this cave?" routine. There were all sorts of possibilities. The tasloi, being high as kites on a fairy dragon's breath weapon, probably should have just pointed and giggled at him. Or asked if he had any weapons or food that they could buy. Or even mistaken him for a *big* tasloi!

Matt, come along to the Western Suburbs Wargaming Association one Saturday. It's nearly a two-hour drive for me to get there, but for twelve hours' gaming, it's worth it! There are lots of games from period miniature wargaming and fantasy wargaming to role-playing.

Ron L. Newsome
9 Wallaby Way
Badger Creek 3777
Victoria, Australia

Equal Time for a Rebuttal

I just wanted to rebut Louis LaMancusa's statement (in issue #47) that "almost every beautiful and friendly female encountered by an adventuring party is either a thief, a trap, or an evil monster in disguise."

On the contrary, there are plenty of nonthreatening women characters in DUNGEON Adventures. Casually paging through my more recent issues, I find several examples: Martinique (#40,

Continued on page 71

TO BITE THE MOON

BY LISA SMEDMAN

A little gnolledge is a dangerous thing.

Artwork by Tom Dow

Lisa began gaming at age 12, when an older neighbor introduced her to miniatures war gaming. She has fond memories of memorizing tank silhouettes from "classified" Department of Defense documents and painting armies of Civil War figurines. Lisa now is a professional freelance game designer whose design work for TSR includes modules in the DARK SUN® and RAVENLOFT® worlds. She also writes fantasy and science fiction.

"To Bite the Moon" is an AD&D® adventure for 4-6 player characters of levels 4-7 (about 30 total levels). However, players who are adept at role-playing stand a good chance of seeing their lower-level characters survive.

This adventure explores the habits and religious beliefs of the gnoll race. (Ideas for role-playing gnolls can be found in *The Complete Book of Humanoids*.) It may be dropped into any ongoing campaign, in a mountainous frontier area where gnolls and hobgoblins are present.

Although this adventure involves a stealthy raid on a gnoll lair, the party need not include a thief. It should, however, include a cleric capable of dealing with poison.

For the Dungeon Master

The gnolls of the Pricklepine Mountains are a dying breed. Not too long ago, they were the masters of the mountains, their territorial claims undisputed. But in recent years, human fortune-seekers, drawn to the area by gold dust in the mountain streams, have encroached on one side, while hobgoblin raiding parties have made incursions on the other. The once-mighty gnoll nation has been broken into smaller tribes that now make their living by staging isolated raids on the wagon trains that bring supplies to the human gold-rush settlements.

Kurgahr, a flind gnoll, is the leader of one of those tribes. A cleric of Refnara, the gnoll goddess of fear, Kurgahr led his people to a "holy cave" deep in the Pricklepine Mountains. Here in their lair, they enjoy the spoils of their raids. Here too they worship and make offerings to their glowing goddess, who rises out of a hole in the floor of a smaller cave within their lair. In return, the goddess has taught them to be brave, and has given them a great gift—a wand that causes humans to flee in

panic, leaving their treasures behind for the gnolls to plunder.

Kurgahr, however, is mistaken in his belief that the goddess Refnara lives inside the hole in the lair's inner chamber. In fact, the creature the gnolls worship is a spirit naga. This snakelike being with glowing skin and a humanoid head has tricked the gnolls into providing the rotten meat that she feeds on and the treasure that she craves. The spirit naga has *charmed* Kurgahr into believing that she is the earthly manifestation of a divine being and now receives offerings from his tribe.

So far, the ruse has worked. According to gnoll lore, the goddess of fear appears in the form of a serpent. Not only does the spirit naga's snakelike body fit the bill, but her glittering, gemlike skin gives her an aura of grandeur in the gnolls' eyes. The gnolls first discovered the cave of the spirit naga while seeking shelter during the night of a full moon, the night on which sacrifices are traditionally made to Refnara. This confirmed the serpent naga's identity as their goddess.

Three days ago, the gnolls raided a wagon train that was hauling barrels of wine and ale to a tavern in the frontier town of Fortunado. The raid began well enough, with Kurgahr using his *wand of fear* to panic the drivers as well as the mules that drew the wagons. The mules raced headlong into a gully, where the wagoneers were savagely ambushed by the gnoll tribe.

Partway through the raid, Kurgahr's wand stopped working. Some of the humans escaped its effects and were able to fight back. A handful escaped.

Although the injuries inflicted on the gnolls were slight, Kurgahr was deeply troubled. Had the goddess turned her back on the gnolls due to some failure on Kurgahr's part? According to gnoll lore, the goddess of fear regularly tests her subjects by deliberately exposing them to frightening situations. Kurgahr now wonders if he is being punished by Refnara because of a momentary display of fear during the ambush.

Kurgahr's tribe, however, was delighted with the results of their raid. They hauled the spoils back to their lair, where they proceeded to indulge heavily in the wine and ale. All were too busy congratulating Kurgahr on the success of the ambush to notice how worried he had suddenly become.

In fact, the wand simply ran out of charges, a situation that the spirit naga will use to her advantage. She doubles her demands for food and treasure, making false promises to restore the wand's functions once Kurgahr's tribe has proven themselves worthy again.

Starting the Adventure

The adventure begins as the PCs enter Fortunado, a hastily constructed mining town in the foothills of the Pricklepine Mountains. The town has a population of about 2,000 people, most of them would-be gold panners who are temporarily housed in tents, preparing to make the hike into the mountains and stake a claim. The town's main street consists of a few dozen buildings: general stores, blacksmith shops, stables, laundries, and taverns. New stores are being constructed every day; the smell of fresh-cut pine and the sound of hammers fills the air.

The PCs may be in the area for a number of reasons. Perhaps they are just passing through or have come to meet with friends. Or they may have come to Fortunado to try their hand at gold panning or to make some quick money by providing services to the miners.

As soon as the PCs arrive in Fortunado, they begin to hear stories about the ill-fated wagon train that was attacked by gnolls three days ago. When they try to order drinks in a tavern, all they are served is sour wine because the expected shipment of beverages is missing. Perhaps the PCs learn that the friends they were planning on meeting here died in the gnoll raid. The PCs may simply become curious about the row of fresh graves being dug for those bodies that were recovered from the gully, or about the stockade that is being hastily constructed around the town.

The people of Fortunado are itching to stage a retaliatory raid on the gnolls but are terrified at the prospect of facing gnolls capable of wielding powerful magic. Although one of the survivors has offered to tell them where the gnoll lair is located, the people have opted instead to concentrate their efforts on building a barrier to protect their town.

A short time after the PCs enter the town, they are summoned to a room in one of the taverns. There they meet the woman who will send them on their adventure. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Lying in bed in one of the upstairs rooms of the inn is a stocky dwarven woman. One of her legs is propped up on a pillow; it ends just below the knee in a stump that has been wrapped with bloody bandages. Her long red hair was once neatly braided but has begun to come undone, and her face is pale. Wincing, she motions to you to shut the door.

"Thank you for coming," she says. "I am Jacinth. I summoned you here because I thought you might be able to help me. Three days ago, I was part of a wagon train, bound for Fortunado, that was attacked by gnolls.

"The attack began when a gnoll leaped out of the bushes beside the trail, pointed a wand at us, and swept a pale red beam over the wagons. The driver of my wagon screamed in terror, and his mules panicked and bolted. I was thrown from the wagon as it surged ahead.

"The next thing I knew, close to two dozen gnolls were upon us. I drew my war hammer and managed to hold my own, despite my wounds. But the others were not so fortunate. Panicked by the magical effects of the wand, they were easily cut down as they ran blindly through the gully. Then one of the gnolls dealt me the blow that cost me my leg, and I lost consciousness.

"When I came to, I found myself hidden in bushes near the gully. One of the drivers—a fellow dwarf who shares my immunity to magic—had dragged me to safety and bound my wounds. I saw the gnolls stripping the wagons of their contents; they also took several of the dead drivers and mules. I insisted that my companion help me set out after the gnolls, but he refused. Instead he carried me here to Fortunado. I probably owe him my life.

"I lost something very valuable in the raid, in addition to my leg—a magical ring and sword, two items that I had been entrusted to carry safely to a client in a city several miles from here." Sighing, Jacinth stares at the stump of her leg. "I may no longer be any good as a courier, but I intend to complete my last assignment. I also intend to see the deaths of so many innocent people avenged and the last of the gnolls

driven from this area."

Jacinth's eyes search yours. "Will you help me to recover what was stolen and to wreak vengeance on the gnolls?"

Jacinth is a member of the White Riders, an elite courier service whose members specialize in the transport of magical items between powerful wizards. All are dwarves, chosen for the service due to their innate resistance to magic and general disinterest in magical devices. Each courier works alone, traveling incognito. Jacinth's delivery should have been straightforward, but she had the misfortune of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Jacinth has little to offer the PCs at the moment except the promise of future reward. If she is able to complete her delivery, she will be paid 6,000 gp. She will pay the PCs up to one-third of this amount if they help her recover the ring and sword, or two-thirds of it if they also help her complete her journey. (The wizard recipient's home is six days from Fortunado, through the Prickle-pine Mountains.)

If the PCs had friends who died in the gnoll ambush, Jacinth commiserates with them, saying what fine people the PCs' friends were. She might even have a final message for the PCs from one of these friends. The DM should make up something appropriate that will lead the PCs to trust Jacinth.

Jacinth knows the exact location of the lair of the gnoll tribe. She gained this information by using a *crystal ball* to watch the gnolls as they returned to their lair. This fist-sized quartz crystal, which she keeps in a pouch tied to her belt, was part of a previous shipment. The wizard who ordered it died prior to delivery, so Jacinth kept the crystal as payment. As a dwarf, she has limited success in using the *crystal ball*; it malfunctions 20% of the time.

If the PCs agree to help Jacinth, she will keep an eye on them with the crystal. If they decide to abscond with the ring and sword, Jacinth alerts her courier service, and its far-flung members are put on the alert to apprehend the PCs and recover the stolen items. She will tell the PCs about the crystal only if absolutely necessary.

Jacinth tells the PCs that the wagon train carried a shipment of nearly two dozen barrels of wine and ale, enough to keep the busy Fortunado taverns going for a week. She speculates that the gnolls will likely all be too drunk to stop the PCs from simply walking into the lair and recovering the stolen property.

The stolen ring is a *ring of three wishes* that has one wish remaining. Jacinth will tell the PCs only that the ring is magical, describing it as a wide gold band with one red ruby and two dull black stones. "If the ruby has also turned black, the ring has lost its magical powers," she explains. "But my client will still want to see it, to verify this fact."

The sword is a *sword +1, luck blade* that was made to match the ring. Its hilt ends in a golden claw-shaped hand balled into a fist. Like the ring, the blade of the sword is set with three rubies that dull and blacken as each wish is made. When Jacinth took delivery of the sword, two of the rubies were still red. Jacinth will describe what the sword looks like, again leaving out the exact nature of the magic the sword contains.

Jacinth was seriously wounded as a result of the gnoll raid and will be grateful for any healing spells the PCs cast on her. Unless the PCs find a way to regenerate her missing limb, however, she will be unable to accompany them into the gnoll lair.

Jacinth, dwarven courier: AL LN; AC 8; MV 3 (normally 12); F4; hp 18 (normally 39); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 15, D 16, C 18, I 15, W 12, Ch 14; MR special; SZ S (4' tall); ML 12; war hammer.

The Gnolls' Lair

The gully where the wagon train was ambushed is a one-day journey from Fortunado. The gnoll lair is another two days' journey, up into the mountains.

Using Jacinth's directions, the PCs must follow a stream that flows down a steep mountain slope into the gully. When they reach a bare outcropping of rock, they must turn right, following a faint trail until they reach a tree that has been blasted by lightning. The entrance to the gnoll lair is just up the hill.

The journey should be relatively uneventful. If the DM feels the need to add random encounters along the way, the PCs could meet up with a mammal that is common to temperate forests, such as a badger, porcupine, boar or wild stag.

During the entire journey, the skies are overcast and a light drizzle falls from the sky. As the PCs reach the lightning-blasted tree, the wind begins to pick up and the trees start to creak and sway. The solid gray clouds overhead break up and blow away.

The entrance to the lair of Kurgahr's tribe is a 10'-wide cleft that winds its way 200' into the mountainside before reaching the main cavern. At the 170' mark, the gnolls have blocked the passageway with a door.

When the PCs arrive, this door is ajar. The gnolls, having drunk too much ale and wine, have forgotten to lock it.

The key to the door hangs around Kurgahr's neck on a leather thong.

1. Main Cavern. A total of 71 gnolls (adults and young) live in this wide cave. They sleep on crude beds made of pine boughs and blankets and keep the cave well stocked with food. The cavern has a 20' ceiling and is warmed by two fires that cast a dim, flickering light. Smoke is drawn out of the lair through a natural chimney in the rock. This chimney narrows dramatically near the top, but a small person might be able to exit through it, if not for the thick smoke and sparks.

A large pile of firewood is stacked along one wall. The barrels and boxes stolen from the wagon train are piled in a loose heap against the other wall. The emptied boxes and barrels have already been burned.

When the PCs enter this area, the gnolls are sleeping off the effects of the last of the wine and ale. Trusting the supposedly locked door to protect them, they have removed their armor and tossed their weapons to one side. Some of the gnolls stir, growling in their sleep or waving their feet in the air as the PCs try to sneak through the cavern.

Kurgahr is easy to spot; he is shorter, broader and more muscular than the other gnolls and has darker fur. He also wears the finest clothing. The now-useless *wand of fear* is stuffed into his belt.

Kurgahr (flind cleric): INT average; AL LE; AC 10 (3 in armor); MV 12; C8; hp 50; THAC0 16; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by weapon type; S 18 (+1, +2), D 16, C 14, I 10, W 13, Ch 14 (18 to gnolls); SA spells, disarm; SZ M (6½' tall); ML 10; XP 2,000; MM/158 (Gnoll); club, flindbar, chain mail.

Kurgahr is normally a strong leader with high morale, but the failure of the wand and his worries that the goddess has rejected his latest offering (the sword) have reduced his morale.

As high cleric of Refnara, gnoll goddess

of fear, Kurgahr has the following spells: *courage*, emotion read*, morale*, remove fear; augury, calm chaos*, emotion perception*; emotion control*, glyph of warding* (as fear glyph), *remove curse; cloak of bravery, protection from good 10' radius.* Spells followed by an asterisk are from the *Tome of Magic* sourcebook. If the DM does not have access to this book, these spells may be replaced by the following: *bless, command, protection from evil; aid, chant; magical vestment.*

Gnoll males (31): INT low; AL CE; AC 10 (5 in armor); MV 9; HD 2; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SZ L (7½' tall); ML 11; XP 35 each; MM/158; sword, battle axe.

Gnoll females (13): AC 10 (no armor); hp 10 each; hand axe; other statistics as for gnoll males.

Gnoll young (26): HD ½; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT nil; Dmg nil; SZ S (3' tall); ML 8; XP 7 each; unarmed; other statistics as for gnoll females.

A Terrible Transformation

As the PCs search the lair for Jacinth's magical sword and ring, a gust of wind blows the tunnel door shut. (If the PCs closed the door behind them, a small rock falling inside the natural chimney creates the necessary noise.) One of the gnolls (probably Kurgahr) awakens and shouts an alarm that alerts the rest of the tribe. There is general confusion as the intoxicated gnolls scramble for their weapons.

In the midst of this chaos, Kurgahr's mate, Argor, awakens. Annoyed by the intrusion, she stares at the PCs. Anyone standing close by who can understand gnoll will hear her grumpily mutter, "Humans? Hmph. I thought they were gnolls from another tribe. I wish they were gnolls. Then I could go back to sleep. Oh well. I guess we can use some fresh meat."

Unfortunately for the PCs, Argor is wearing the *ring of three wishes*, which Kurgahr reluctantly gave her after finding it was too small to fit on any of his fingers. As Argor utters these words, the ring's remaining ruby flares brilliantly, casting a bright red light through the cavern, then fades to black.

Each of the PCs (even outside the lair) is immediately transformed into a gnoll. Each PC now has a 7'-tall body covered in coarse yellow-red hair. Their ears are pointed and erect, their noses are whiskered snouts, and their canine teeth are elongated and sharp. Yellow, curved nails emerge from their fingers and toes.

As gnolls, the PCs have a keen sense of smell. Thanks to Argor 's wish, they also speak Gnollish. The first time they try to say something, they speak in a language that is a mixture of sharp barks and howls. The PCs still understand any languages they knew previously but have difficulty pronouncing some of the words. They think in Gnollish.

While the PCs' Wisdom scores remain unchanged, other statistics are different. Each PCs' Strength increases by +1 (or to 6 if below that number). Dexterity and Constitution are increased to meet the minimum score of 5 for gnolls or are lowered to meet the maximum score of 18. (If they are already within this range, the scores do not change.) Intelligence and Charisma decrease by −1 (or are lowered to the maximum score for gnolls of 14).

The PCs retain their former alignments, hit points, and abilities (mundane and magical) although wizards may find spells more difficult to cast. If Intelligence drops to 8 or less, a gnoll PC loses the ability to cast spells. Wizard gnolls function as witch doctors but do not gain the clerical abilities of this class; they continue casting only wizard spells and are limited to spells of 3rd level or less. (See page 79 of *The Complete Book of Humanoids* for ideas on how a gnoll tribe would react to a witch doctor.)

Clerical PCs who become gnolls may find (at DM's discretion) that some of their abilities are limited, if their god is one who would find their new form offensive or displeasing.

Equipment is unaffected by the change; clothing and armor simply enlarge and expand to fit the PCs' new bodies. However, the PCs may have difficulty explaining any non-gnollish items of clothing or equipment, such as holy symbols, plate armor, etc. The PCs also retain their former personalities—for the moment. But for each day that goes by (starting with the day after their transformation) they must make an Intelligence check. (Use the system outlined in the 4th-level spell *polymorph other*.) Those who fail an Intelligence check assume the personality and mentality of a gnoll.

The PCs may regain their original forms only by means of another *wish* spell (thus giving them added incentive to find the magical sword). No system shock rolls are required.

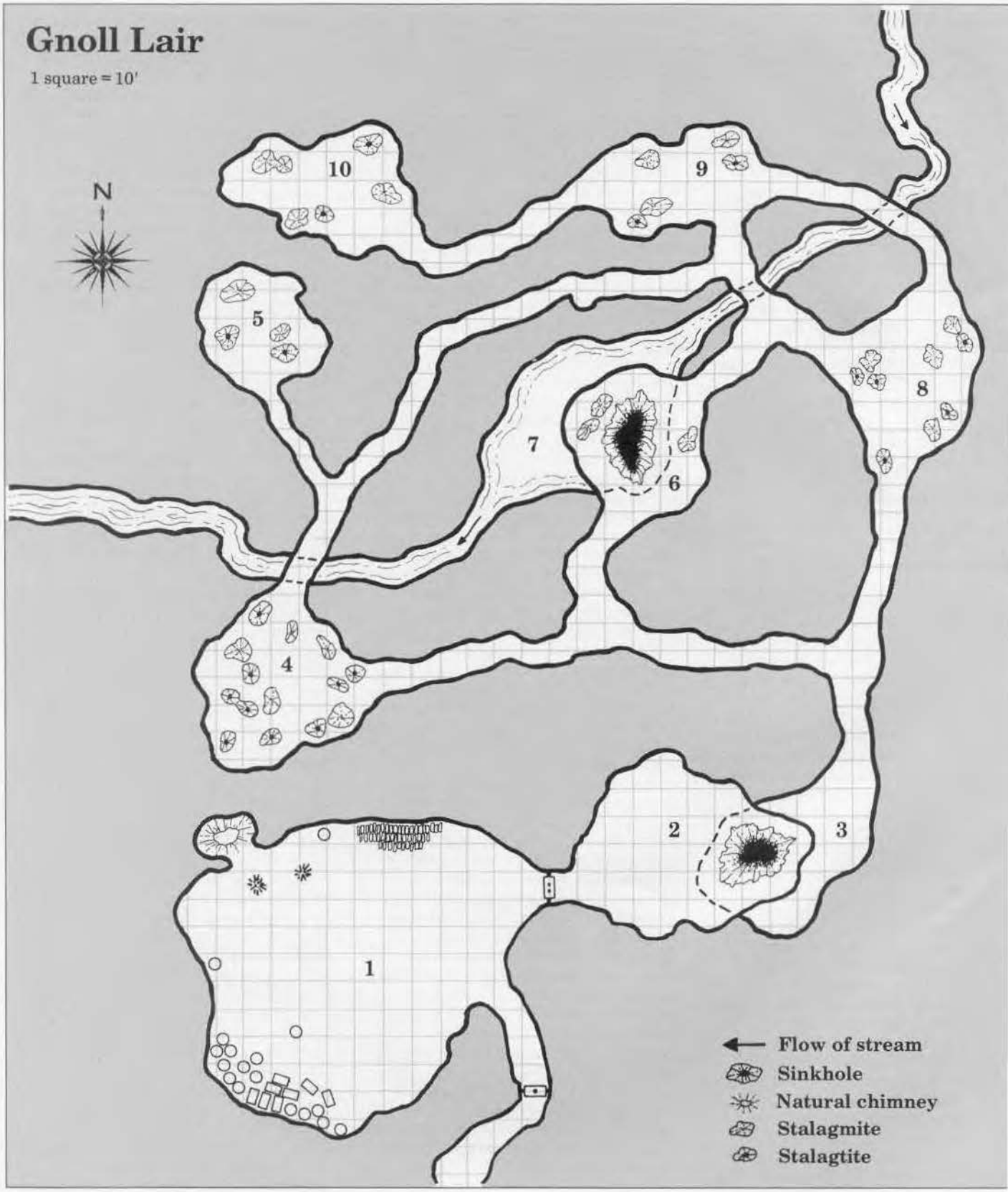
When the PCs are transformed into gnolls, the members of Kurgahr's tribe are still intoxicated. They react with surprise to the change, rubbing their eyes and blinking stupidly. Then Kurgahr leans forward to sniff the face of the nearest PC. Satisfied that the PC is indeed a gnoll, he laughs, claps an arm around him, and shouts, "Welcome, friend! What tribe are you from?"

Kurgahr questions the PCs about their tribe, asks for the name of its leader, and inquires about the location of their lair. When he is satisfied with their answers, Kurgahr asks whether the newcomers have come to worship in the holy cave. As long as the PCs' answers are reasonable and they don't contradict one another, Kurgahr accepts them as fellow gnolls and offers the hospitality of his tribe. Unfortunately, accepting this hospitality means drinking copious amounts of ale and wine—enough to muddle the PCs' thinking and slow their reactions. Fortunately, the real gnolls are equally addled.

The gnolls' supply of beverages is running low, but they intend to drink until it is gone. The ale and wine is served in huge wooden cups. Anyone handed a cup is expected to drain it. Consuming one cup results in a reduction of Wisdom and Intelligence by one point each. Consuming a second cup results in a reduction of Dexterity by one point. Each subsequent cup consumed further reduces one of these three statistics (DM's choice) by one point and additionally reduces hand-eye coordination, for a −1 penalty on attack rolls. All of these losses are temporary. Once consumption stops, lost points are restored at a rate of two per hour, with the player deciding which of the statistics (Wisdom, Intelligence, or Dexterity) will be restored. The attack penalty is decreased at a rate of one point per hour.

Gnoll tradition insists on an exchange of gifts whenever members from different tribes meet. Kurgahr asks which of the PCs is the representative for their tribe, then slowly circles that person, looking for any valuables or weapons. He begins the ritual exchange by stating, in a formal tone, "I welcome you, tooth brother (or sister), to my tribe." He then leaps forward and uses his canine teeth to nip the PC hard enough to draw blood (for 1 hp damage).

"Argh!" Kurgahr barks. "You are hurt! I will ease your pain." He staggers over to the heap of boxes that hold the gnoll's treasure trove and scoops a handful of gold coins from one of them.


Gnoll Lair
1 square = 10'
N
10
9
5
8
7
6
4
2
3
1
Flow of stream
Sinkhole
Natural chimney
Stalagmite
Stalagtite

He then presents these to the PC, who is expected to nip Kurgahr in return, then present him with an even more valuable gift.

If the PCs react to Kurgahr's bite with an attack, other members of his tribe rush in to subdue them. "Be polite!" Kurgahr tells the PCs. "It was only a nip. Surely a tough gnoll like you can take it." He then adds, "Now it's your turn."

The DM can carry on the exchange until either Kurgahr or the PC runs out of gifts. The gnolls' treasure includes 3,000 gp, two gems (500 gp and 50 gp value), a jade necklace, and a silver dagger with a dog-headed hilt. Eventually, Kurgahr demands the ring from Argor and presents it to the PCs as a gift. If asked about the sword, he explains that he presented it as an offering to Refnara four days ago. He then peers at the PCs and asks, "But how did you know about the sword?"

If the PCs stumble too much on their answer, the DM can help them out a little. Kurgahr prompts, "Did Refnara reveal it to you in a nightmare?" Give the PCs a little time to stumble over the name, then have Kurgahr add, "Do you bring offerings for the goddess?" If the PCs' answer is yes, Kurgahr is delighted; perhaps the offerings of the newcomers will placate Refnara.

The gnolls offer their new friends fresh meat. The PCs are able to tell, through their improved sense of smell, that some of it is mule. The rest is unidentifiable and faintly unsavory. If they refuse to eat, the gnolls regard them with shock; the flesh they are serving is a delicacy. Kurgahr is highly offended if the PCs refuse the grilled mule livers he offers them.

After the exchange of gifts and the meal, the gnolls invite the PCs to play games with them. One of these games involves blindfolding one gnoll, then slapping and kicking him while barking furiously. Anyone whom the blindfolded gnoll is able to catch and wrestle to the ground becomes the next victim. The gnolls also like to dance. While some of the tribe beats on the floor with bones, other gnolls leap into the center of the circle to dance in a series of hops punctuated by moments in which all of the dancers remain stock still for several moments, each standing on one foot with nose in the air as if sniffing the wind for prey. Especially good dancers are applauded with a chorus of yips and howls. Any PC with dancing proficiency should make a check against this skill. PCs without this nonweapon proficiency must make Dexterity checks at −5 (plus penalties for having drunk too much) in order to succeed at gnollish dancing.

Throughout the exchange of gifts, the meal and the game playing, the wind outside dies down. Eventually, one of the gnolls leaves the party to momentarily exit the cavern. When he returns, he announces that the sky has cleared, revealing a full moon. In response to this news, the entire tribe of gnolls nervously crouches, the hair on the backs of their necks raised, looking fearfully at Kurgahr. He may respond by casting a *morale* or *remove fear* spell on the most frightened members of the group.

Into the Temple

Gnolls are highly superstitious and place great emphasis on the phases of the moon. They believe that whenever a full moon can be seen in the sky, it is highly dangerous to leave the lair. (This belief probably comes from the gnolls' instinctive avoidance of bright light. When they do venture out during the day it is usually overcast and gray.) The PCs will look out of place if they show no terror at the news of the full moon, which will not set for several hours.

As the goddess of fear, Refnara regularly sends the full moon to test the bravery of the gnolls who worship her. The tribe will expect Kurgahr to placate the goddess with a sacrifice or offering, so that she will bite pieces out of the moon and return darkness to the night sky. Reluctantly (for he is intensely fearful that he has offended Refnara in some way), Kurgahr prepares to consult his goddess.

2. Temple of Refnara. This cave is closed off from the main lair of the gnolls by a stout door that only Kurgahr is allowed to open.

Beyond the door is a cave with a 15′ ceiling and a 10′-wide sinkhole in the floor at the far end. This hole leads down to a series of passageways and caverns that form the lair of the spirit naga.

To the gnolls, this cavern is a holy temple. They must wait for Kurgahr to enter first, then crawl forward on their hands and knees. When Kurgahr leads the tribe into the temple, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> Kurgahr enters the smaller cave on his hands and knees and crawls to the rear of the cavern. In the dim light cast by the fires behind you, it is just possible to see the outline of a wide, jagged hole in the floor. Your sensitive noses twitch as you catch a faint odor of rot.
>
> Kurgahr leans over the hole, cups his hands around his mouth, and chants loudly: "Oh Refnara, goddess of fear and dread. Your servants come trembling into your chamber. We beg you to appear before us and tell us what we must do to appease you so that you will bite the moon and return darkness to the skies."
>
> For several minutes, there is nothing but silence in reply. Then you hear, echoing up through the hole, a distant noise that sounds like high-pitched screaming. After a moment or two it stops.
>
> Suddenly, Kurgahr scrambles backward from the hole. Something is stirring below.
>
> With a frenzied fluttering of wings, half a dozen bats fly out of the hole. They whirl around the cave, then disappear into the darkness at the ceiling. A rustling sound comes up from below, and a faint purple glow begins to fill the hole.
>
> Slowly, the head of a woman rises through the center of the hole. Her hair is stringy and her dark eyes hold a burning intensity. What little you can see of her neck glitters brightly; it looks like she is wearing a tight wide necklace of red and black gems. Elsewhere, every inch of her skin and hair glows with an unearthly purple light. The rest of her body is lost in the purple glow that fills the hole below her.
>
> The woman's head bobs gently at the center of the hole as her hungry gaze lingers momentarily on each person in the room. At last she opens her mouth, revealing wicked fangs. When she speaks, her breath carries the rot of the grave.
>
> "Treasure and meat," she hisses. "That is what I crave. You must bring me more."
>
> "Did the sword not please you, O Great Goddess?" Kurgahr asks.
>
> The woman's face darkens with a frown. "You must do better than that."
>
> Kurgahr begins to tremble. "But the wand . . ."

"More meat!" the goddess shrieks. "More treasure!"

"But the moon . . ." Kurgahr whispers. "You will bite away the moon?"

"I will bite away the moon," she answers. "And you will find me more treasure. And meat."

"O mighty Refnara," Kurgahr answers, nodding obediently, "your fear drives us onward. We will do as you demand."

Refnara nods and smiles wickedly. Then, with a rustling sound, her head sinks quickly back into the hole, and the dim lavender glow fades away. Kurgahr ushers his tribe out and closes the door to the inner cavern.

The Lower Caverns

To recover the magical sword, which now lies deep inside the spirit naga's lair, the PCs must think of an excuse to enter the lower caverns. They could try to bluff their way back into the Temple of Refnara while the gnolls are still inside their lair, but this will take some fast talking and creative excuses. Or they might wait until the moon has set and the gnolls leave their lair to raid another wagon train. However, the gnolls will expect their new friends to accompany them—especially since the PCs were in the presence of the goddess when Refnara commanded the tribe to go out raiding. Alternatively, the PCs might volunteer to help guard the gnoll lair, but this will earn them suspicious looks from the gnoll raiders, who will jeer at the PCs' lack of courage. It will also mean overpowering or fast-talking the females who remain behind to care for the young.

Note: All of the lower caverns have 10′-high ceilings.

3. Cavern Entrance. The floor of this cave lies 12′ below the floor of the Temple of Refnara, and is connected to it by a jagged hole. Below this hole lie a number of loose stones. Careful observers will notice that large, glittering black and red scales are scattered among the stones, as if they had been scraped off some large creature.

This cave is home to a number of bats. If disturbed by the PCs, they will drop from their toeholds on the ceiling and flutter around the cavern, some winging their way through the corridors that lead away from this area. Other than getting in the way of the PCs, the bats pose no real danger. About 10% of the animals glow with a faint purple light (a covering of mold from area 5).

Bats, common (10-100): INT animal; AL N; AC 8; MV 1, fly 24 (B); HD ¼; hp 1-2 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA swarm; SD confusion; SZ T (1′ long); ML 2; XP 15; MM/15.

4. Tick Attack. Tucked away behind one of the stalagmites in this cave is a glittering, empty tube of dead skin that the spirit naga shed one year ago. Its bands of red and black scales glitter like obsidian and ruby. The skin is 15′ long and was shed before the naga became infected with lavender mold (in area 5).

The spirit naga used to make her home in this lair until it became infested with ticks. These insects hide on the stalactites that fill this cavern, dropping on the PCs to feed on their blood.

Ticks, giant (3-12): INT non; AL N; AC 3; MV 3; HD 2; hp 10 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA blood drain, disease; SZ S (2′-3′ long); ML 9; XP 35 each; MM/204 (Insect).

Any sounds of battle from this area have a 10% chance of alerting the spirit naga to the presence of the PCs. She immediately slithers from her lair and begin to search for intruders.

5. Lavender Mold. A narrow corridor, no more than 3′ wide, leads to this small cave. Inside, patches of mold on the walls, ceiling, and floor glow with a soft purple light. If the PCs touch this lavender mold with bare skin, they find that it begins to spread across their bodies, growing at a phenomenal rate. Within 3-12 rounds, the mold has covered every inch of skin (even inside the mouth and nose). The infected person begins to glow with a faint purple light (just strong enough to be seen 30′ away in absolute darkness). Anyone touched by an infected person will also be infected.

Lavender mold cannot be washed off the skin except with alcohol (which kills the mold). Because the mold has rooted itself in the skin, it cannot be brushed or scraped away without damaging the infected creature. A *cure disease* spell, however, will quickly remove it.

While the light cast by the mold may be a nuisance, there are also beneficial effects. Creatures covered in lavender mold heal at an accelerated rate, recovering 1 hit point per hour. Additionally, lavender mold causes missing limbs to regenerate in 2-8 days.

There is only one drawback. Exposure to sunlight—even indirect sunlight—kills the lavender mold. If even a portion of the mold on an infected creature is exposed to sunlight, all of the mold on that creature will instantly begin to wither and die. (Artificial light, such as that cast by torches or spells, has no ill effects on the mold.)

6. Descent into Darkness. The corridor widens, forming a cavern. In the floor of the cave is a jagged hole about 8′ wide and 20′ long. Cool air rises from the hole, accompanied by the sound of gurgling water.

If the PCs search this cave, they can find a grappling hook wedged between two of the stalagmites. A short piece of rope is attached to the hook. The rope is just long enough so that if it were stretched out, its frayed end would reach the edge of the hole.

7. Underground Stream. The floor of this cavern is 30′ below that of area 6. In the middle of the floor is a pool about 8′ deep. Pale white fish, each about 4″ long, flash in the water.

The pool is fed by an underground stream that flows into it through a narrow fissure, about 5′ wide, in the northeast wall. The stream continues out of the cavern through a larger passage, about 10′ wide, in the southwest wall. The stream is about 6′ deep.

Lying on the floor of the cavern, just under the hole in the ceiling, are two dead hobgoblins. They wear chain mail, bright red tunics emblazoned with their tribal crest (three black skulls), and heavy leather boots. The hobgoblins carry shields and long swords. A coil of rope with a frayed end lies beside them.

If the PCs carefully observe the hobgoblins, they notice that the swords and armor are badly corroded and smeared with a glistening slime. The tunics and boots have holes in them, and the bodies of the hobgoblins themselves have terrible wounds that look as if the flesh and bone had been melted away. One of the hobgoblins has a broken leg.

The hobgoblins' pockets contain a total of 28 cp and 6 gp. One of the hobgoblins has a *dagger +2* in his boot. Its hilt ends in a grinning black skull. The other hobgoblin has a potion of *clairvoyance* in his backpack.

The hobgoblins are two scouts from the Grinning Skull tribe who had been searching for a secret entrance to the gnoll lair in preparation for an attack on Kurgahr's tribe. They entered the cavern through the larger fissure. This 10′-wide natural passageway runs for 500′ before emerging behind a thick

screen of brambles, not too far from the entrance to the gnoll lair.

The hobgoblins were just starting to explore this area when they were killed by a giant slug, which was attracted to the scene by the hobgoblin who fell. The slug emerges from the smaller crack as the PCs are investigating the hobgoblin bodies.

Slug, giant: INT non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 12; hp 44; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1-12; SA spits acid; SD immune to blunt weapons; SZ H (25' long); ML 12; XP 5,000; MM/319.

Fortunately for the PCs, the gurgling of the stream and their distance below the main caverns will muffle the sound of any battle. They can easily escape the giant slug by climbing back out of this cavern—if they have thought to secure their own rope to the grappling hook found in area 6.

8. Cave Fishers. Hiding on a ledge above the entrance to this cavern are two cave fishers. These unusual creatures normally feed on the bats that occasionally stray into this cavern; a number of bat skeletons litter the floor. Observant PCs who enter the cave have a 20% chance of noticing one of the sticky weblike filaments that these insectoid creatures use to snare their prey.

Normally, cave fishers will not attack larger creatures. But if one of the PCs wanders into this area alone, or if the party is seriously weakened, the cave fishers' hunger might override their caution.

Cave fishers (2): INT semi; AL N; AC 4; MV 1; HD 3; hp 13 each; THAC0 17 or 15; #AT 2; Dmg 2-8/2-8; SA adhesive trapline; SD climbing; SZ M (7' long); ML 12; XP 175 each; MM/40.

Any sounds of battle from this area have a 25% chance of alerting the spirit naga to the presence of the PCs. She immediately slithers from her lair and begins to search for intruders.

9. Cricket Alarm. As soon as they enter this cavern, the PCs begin to smell a strong, putrid odor coming from the passageway beyond.

This cavern contains eight cave crickets. Any creature passing through starts the crickets chirping loudly. (This was the high-pitched "screaming" sound the PCs heard when the spirit naga left her lair to talk to the gnolls in area 2.) The echoing noise of the chirping is so loud that it drowns out all sounds inside the cave or within 20' of it, making speech and vocal spellcasting impossible.

Occasionally, the crickets are set off by the bats from area 3, which fly into this cave to feed on the tiny offspring of the cave crickets. There is a 10% chance that the spirit naga will ignore the crickets as a false alarm and remain in her lair. Otherwise, she immediately slithers out to investigate.

Cave crickets (8): INT non; AL N; AC 4; MV 6, hop 3; HD 1+3; hp 8 each; THAC0 20; #AT nil; Dmg nil; SA chirping; SZ T (6" long); ML 2; XP 15 each; MM/204 (Insect).

10. Lair of the Spirit Naga. The spirit naga makes her lair in the back of this cave, surrounded by the rotting corpses she loves to eat and the treasure the gnolls have given her as offerings. Somewhere in the foul-smelling pile of human and mule carcasses and dung-smeared treasure is the sword the PCs are looking for.

The first thing the PCs see on entering the lair is a faint purple glow coming from the rear of the cavern. This is the spirit naga, who some time ago

Continued on page 31

THE ORACLE AT SUMBAR

BY PAUL CULOTTA

Does it tell the truth or spin tall tales?

Artwork by David Kooharian

Paul would like to dedicate this maritime adventure to his dad, Sam Culotta, the youngest chief engineer in the U.S. Merchant Marine in World War II. Sam survived two torpedo attacks during the war and is retired in Richmond, Virginia. Paul remembers his dad coming home laden with booty from faraway lands and many wild tales of life at sea. As this adventure is being published, Paul and his family are on their way to the West Coast for a new military assignment.

"The Oracle at Sumbar" is an AD&D® adventure for 4-8 good or neutral player characters of levels 4-6 (about 30 total levels). It will be helpful if the PCs have some means to breathe underwater (*helm of underwater action, water breathing* spell, etc.). The adventure takes place in the Sea of Fallen Stars (the Inner Sea) in the Forgotten Realms, but the DM can easily adapt it to other maritime settings with a little bit of work. DMs with access to *Pirates of the Fallen Stars (PFS)* may wish to review that book to add atmosphere and texture to the story line.

For the Dungeon Master

Many a pirate has sailed into the Sea of Fallen Stars to gain notoriety and wealth, but the most famous of all was Immurk "the Invincible." He was the first to give his men fair shares of treasure in exchange for total loyalty, and it did not take him long to build up a large following. Fat merchant vessels fell quickly to his plundering, and he developed a network of spies and saboteurs to hinder the civilized nations and prevent them from retaliating. Nine expeditions were undertaken against Immurk, and each one failed miserably.

Immurk died of a heart attack at the end of a battle with a Sembian warship. When his successors anxiously searched the pirate chieftain's private treasure vaults, they found a vast trove but not everything they expected. Some of Immurk's treasure was missing: several very fine gems, the stolen crown of Palaghard I of Cormyr, many platinum pieces, and some magical items. Search parties scoured the Dragonisle, Immurk's base of operations, but no one could find the missing treasure. Mages cast *locate object* spells and drank potions of *treasure finding*, all to no avail. Finally the most powerful cleric among the pirates cast a *speak with dead* spell

on Immurk's remains, but his questions only provoked eerie, hollow laughter from the corpse.

In the end, everyone gave up and Immurk's body was buried at sea. But rumors persisted, and soon the legend of the lost treasure of Immurk had spread throughout the Sea of Fallen Stars. Unscrupulous con men often sell false maps to novice adventurers, but all treasure-hunting expeditions to the Pirate Isles have resulted in failure or death.

Like most legends, this one is based on fact. Immurk's lost treasure does exist, but the pirate chieftain was the only mortal who knew its whereabouts. Immurk realized that there were many inherent risks in his trade, and he foresaw that one day he might have to bribe a rebellious crew or captor. So he stashed some of his private treasure in an underwater grotto off a remote island.

Immurk transported the loot in a small sailing vessel with just a few crewmen and one priest. When he got to the grotto, he placed the treasure underwater himself, using a *helm of underwater action*, and ordered the priest to summon permanent undead guards for the cache. On the way back to the Dragonisle, Immurk poisoned the priest and crew and tossed their bodies overboard, then made up a story about how his shipmates had perished in a fight with sahuagin.

Even though Immurk never disclosed the secret location of his treasure, there is an entity that does know where the booty can be found: the omniscient Oracle on the island of Sumbar. In this adventure, the PCs learn how to sail to the mysterious Oracle. Then they must decipher the Oracle's riddle and retrieve the lost treasure. Finally, the PCs must resolve a moral dilemma concerning an important part of the treasure.

For the Player Characters

The PCs begin the adventure in the city of Yhaunn, in the merchant kingdom of Sembia (although the DM may place them in another port city if that is more consistent with the campaign). Yhaunn is detailed in *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures (FRA)*, pages 118-119. The adventurers have been staying in town for about a week, and the first merchant vessels of the season have just arrived. The PCs are between adventures and are visiting Marla Wyverhold, the aunt of one of the PCs. Aunt Marla is a widow whose husband, a merchant captain, died several years ago. Captain Slorus Wyverhold had built up a tidy sum for his retirement, and Marla used it to open a dress shop featuring the latest styles of the south and east.

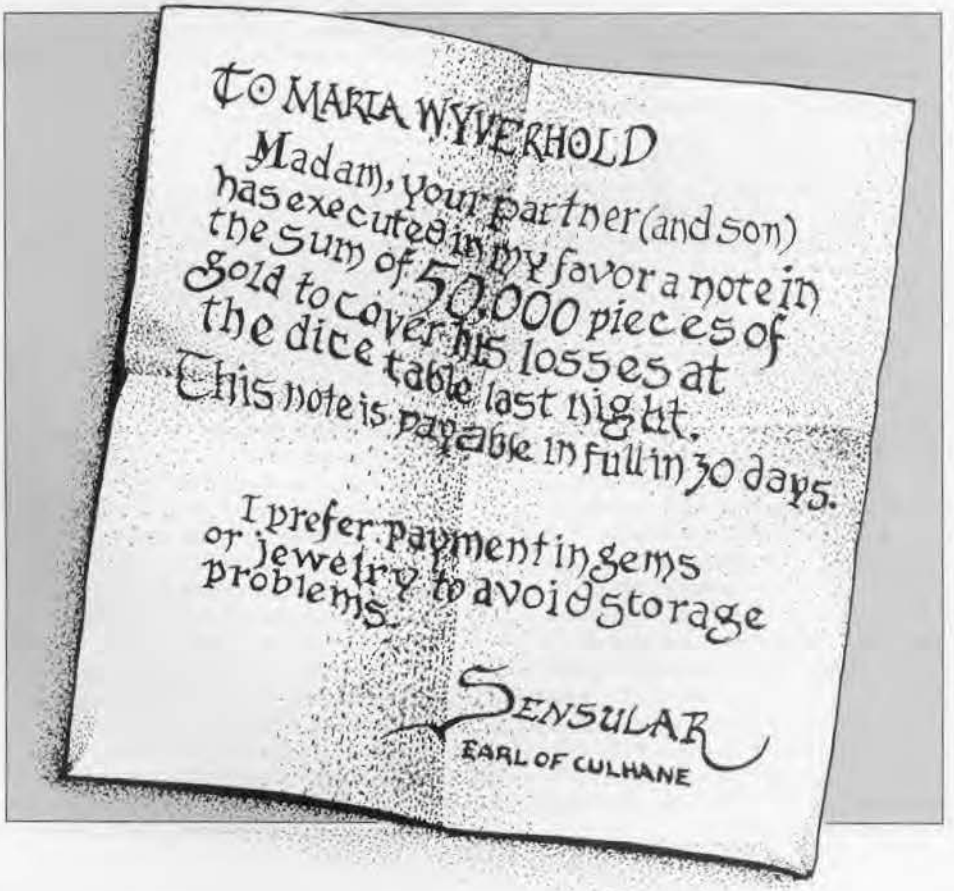
Three months ago, Marla's wastrel son, Spunk, became of legal age, and she signed papers making him a full partner in the business. Her hope was that this new responsibility would encourage him to stop frequenting the "wrong" side of town, drinking heavily, and gambling. Alas, it did nothing of the sort, and Spunk's vices only got worse. Aunt Marla doesn't like to complain about her son, but the PCs have seen the results of Spunk's life of dissipation during their visit. Eventually, Spunk's gambling goes too far.

The winter and spring storms have finally ebbed, and you feel the need to hit the road again—or perhaps catch a ship to a new land. You've noticed that the ships that were quartered here over the winter have departed and the first arrivals of the trading season have just made port.

It was very generous of Aunt Marla to invite you and your companions to her home for a farewell dinner. It has been a sumptuous feast, with rare dishes accompanied by fine wine. After the servants have cleared the last of the dishes away, Aunt Marla clears her throat and says:

"I am glad you all have spent some time in our fair city, but I see that same spark that always came into my dear Slorus's eyes—the lust for adventure—will soon take you away. Before you go, however, I have a small favor to ask."

Her face reddens a bit and a tear starts to make its way down her cheek, then she continues in a choking voice. "Three months ago I made Spunk a full partner in the business. I hoped that a position of responsibility would change his terrible habits, but alas, not only did they worsen, he has now done something that threatens me with financial disaster. This morning a messenger from the Earl of Culhane arrived with this note."


TO MARTA WYVERHOLD
Madam, your partner (and son) has executed in my favor a note in the sum of 50,000 pieces of gold to cover his losses at the dice table last night.
This note is payable in full in 30 days.
I prefer payment in gems or jewelry to avoid storage problems.
SENSULAR
EARL OF CULHANE

The DM should hand the PCs a copy of the note on page 17. Aunt Marla then continues:

> "I don't know how I can possibly pay such a sum. All told, I only have 4,000 gold pieces set aside for emergencies, and the shop itself is worth only 10,000 gp, which is what a merchant offered me a year ago. I know that you do not have this type of money to give me, but I have one hope."
>
> Marla goes to an old chest and removes a dusty leather-bound book.
>
> "I looked once more through Slorus's sea chest in the hope of finding something I may have overlooked when he died, and I found this in a concealed compartment in the lid of the chest. It is a book written in a strange tongue, that may be worth enough money to get us out of debt. I would try to sell it myself, but word has already spread through town about my predicament and I fear that no one will offer me a fair price. I ask that you try to sell it for me. If you can bring in enough to get me out of this terrible debt, I would gladly reward you with a small commission."
>
> With more tears streaming down her face, Marla bursts out crying and says, "I just don't know what else to do!"

The DM should play Marla as totally distraught over her predicament, and should award 100 XP to the PC who shows enough sensitivity to calm Marla down.

Once she has recovered, Marla reveals that three people in town may be interested in buying the book: Strasus "the Bold" Thingoleir, a cranky wizard who lives on the west end of town; Samantha, the town librarian; and Nicodemus, a sage who lives and works in the business center.

The book is written in a language the PCs have never seen. It is entirely filled with writing except the last two pages, which are blank. A *read magic* spell reveals that it is not a spellbook. A *comprehend languages* spell or a rogue PC who makes a successful read languages roll can determine that it is a rutter, a maritime navigational aid that details sailing instructions from place to place. As such, the book will be quite valuable to seagoing captains once it is translated. If the PCs can't determine the nature of the book, they will certainly be able to do so once they visit Nicodemus the sage.

Selling the Rutter

Marla offers the PCs 10% of the book's sale price as their commission, but the PC related to Marla should probably offer to give up his share. If so, give him 200 XP. If he convinces the other PCs to do the same, give him 1,000 XP and each PC who agrees to do so 300 XP.

The three prospective buyers are easy to find with directions from Marla, and the PCs should have no encounters in the city unless the DM wants to include random events (such as a thief snatching the book and running away).

Strasus' Tower

The wizard's tower on the west end of town is visible from many blocks away. It is 70' tall and has no windows, doors, or any other apparent entrances or exits. The tower is protected by a powerful *anti-magic shell* that prevents scrying, *dimension door, teleport,* or other means of magical observation or entry.

If the PCs use the knocker attached to the east side of the tower, a tooth-filled mouth and a bloodshot eye appear on the wall. In Strasus' deep and hideous voice, the mouth demands to know what the PCs want and why they are wasting his time. Once the PCs explain, Strasus asks them to hold the book up to the eye and leaf through the pages so that the eye can peruse them all.

When he has examined the book thoroughly, the wizard says, "Well, I don't have much use for a rutter, especially one written in this language, but to get you out of my hair I'll give you 200 gp." The PCs may negotiate, but in the end Strasus says, "Look, it's worth something, but 400 gp is the best I'll do. Take it or leave it!"

If the PCs take the offer, Strasus directs them to place the book on the ground at the foot of the tower. In the blink of an eye, the book disappears and is replaced by a sack of gold pieces. The adventure, however, is over and Aunt Marla goes broke.

If the PCs refuse Strasus' offer, the wizard says, "Fine, now get out of here!" The magical eye and mouth vanish, and nothing the PCs do will get the wizard back.

It should be obvious that Strasus is a very high level grouchy wizard who should not be disturbed too often. If the PCs visit him again, he becomes very angry and tells them to stay away unless they have something substantial to sell, or he will turn them all into toads. Unless the PCs take off rapidly, he casts a *polymorph other* spell through the magical eye on the most talkative and persistent PC.

Town Library

The town library has a fine assortment of all types of books. Samantha, a prim, auburn-haired woman in her late thirties, expresses considerable interest in the book. She offers 250 gp for it. No amount of haggling will get Samantha to raise her price because she has limited funds for new acquisitions and is unable to go higher. She cannot read the book but knows that she can hire Nicodemus or (as a last resort) Strasus to translate it.

Nicodemus the Sage

In "the Stiltways," a many-tiered shopping district of Yhaunn, Nicodemus the sage lives in a small storefront home. In his first floor office, a cluttered desk overflows with miscellaneous papers and curios. Even the chairs are occupied with stacks of documents and other paraphernalia held down with statuettes, paperweights, and other heavy objects.

Nicodemus is in his early fifties. His hair and beard are mostly gray, and he is developing a bald spot on the very top of his head. His warm smile and the twinkle in his blue-gray eyes make him look as if he has been up to some sort of mischief. He barely supports himself by translating documents, buying odd books and reselling them to the town library, writing letters for those who cannot do this for themselves, and doing a bit of magic. Nicodemus could be quite successful if he were a little more focused and not so absent-minded.

Nicodemus: AL CG; AC 9; MV 12; W4; hp 13; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 11; S 8, D 15, C 11, I 16, W 13, Ch 12; staff. Spells: *comprehend languages, detect magic, sleep; knock, mirror image.* Nicodemus has four other first-level and two other second-level spells in his spellbook (DM's choice). He carries a *ring of protection +1;* a *dagger +1;* a bag with *pills of water breathing* (two per PC); and lots of pens, ink, and paper to record what he has learned. One of the pens is a *quill of everflowing ink*; its writing will fill 3,000 full-sized pages.

When the PCs present themselves and

state their business, the sage greets them warmly and offers them a cup of tea. Then he hustles about, moving stacks of papers off the furniture so everyone can sit down. Once the PCs state their business, Nicodemus goes over to his desk, lights a candle, and starts looking through Aunt Marla's book. Nicodemus remarks that the book is written, fortunately, in a language he understands, and that it is a navigation rutter. He offers the princely sum of 100 gp to buy it, or if the PCs won't sell, he offers to translate it for a fee of 25 gp.

The PCs may sigh in exasperation and decide to sell the rutter to any of the bidders they have visited. Conceivably they could hire Nicodemus to translate it and offer to sell it to one of the ship captains or navigators in port; in this case, they can negotiate up to 500 gp. If the PCs do sell the book, the adventure is over.

If the PCs haggle with the sage, he sets the book down and waves his arms wildly while he bargains. ("Why are you trying to take advantage of a poor old man? Don't you realize I'm doing you a favor by taking this old book off your hands?") As he does so, Nicodemus accidentally knocks the candle onto the open book and is so shaken up that the PCs must quickly put out the fire.

When the book is picked up and examined, none of the pages appear seriously damaged. However, on the last two pages close to the burn marks, a bit of faint brown writing has appeared. Nicodemus exclaims, "Well, by the hair of Mystra! It looks like someone has penned a secret message on the last two pages!"

He carefully holds the blank pages above the candle's flame, far enough for them not to be burned but close enough so that the rest of the secret writing appears. As the sage reads the newly revealed words, he exclaims, "Oh, my!" and "How about that!" and "So that's how you can get there safely!"

When his attention is brought back to the matter at hand, Nicodemus tells the PCs:

> "Well, this book is considerably more valuable than I originally thought. Contained on these two pages are notes on how to get to a very mysterious place. Anyone who goes there may be able to unlock the answers to finding a long lost treasure trove. I will happily translate the secret writing for you for no fee at all except this: If you decide to recover this treasure, I want to accompany you and gain an equal share for myself. I am getting on in years and need to secure my future, and I can be quite useful. Many years have I spent studying the history and lore of this area, and there could be occasions for you to know a thing or two. A little knowledge can be a useful thing, you know. But beware! You would not want to share this information with anyone else. Many a scurvy knave would slit you open like a mackerel to get the secrets in this book. What say you?"

If the PCs don't agree to Nicodemus's terms, they may be able to translate the writing themselves with a *comprehend languages* spell, a rogue's read languages check, or a PC with ancient languages proficiency. If they do agree with his terms, Nicodemus translates the two pages, which say:

> *The wine worked perfectly just as Seluccus said it would, and the fool spilled his guts. Little did I suspect that he would give me a safe passage to and from Sumbar! Now I will gain great riches—perhaps it knows where Immurk's lost treasure is! But enough. Here is what Marco said between his belches and trying to drift off into sleep:*
>
> *"In the second ride of Mirtul, the reefs become locked around Sumbar. That is the only time that one can safely approach the place. Be sure to approach from the southeast, heading directly toward the southernmost point. There one may find a channel deep enough for a seagoing vessel to get close. Any other approach will put you onto a reef and bring certain destruction. Be sure to leave before the ride ends, for then the reefs will become unlocked and move again, and it will be impossible to get out except through sheer luck."*

The PCs may be puzzled by this cryptic message, but Nicodemus has figured out what it says. He explains the legend of Immurk's lost treasure (See "For the Dungeon Master" for details) and recounts that the isle of Sumbar is reputed to be the home of a sentient, all-knowing oracle. If anything on Toril knows the location of Immurk's treasure, the Oracle should know. Nicodemus also states that little is known about the island, because Sumbar is surrounded by deadly reefs that supposedly move every time someone asks the Oracle a question.

Apparently, this secret message was written by someone who had learned that in the second ride (10 days) of Mirtul (May), the reefs are locked in place. This information presents an ideal opportunity to get to Sumbar, ask the Oracle where the treasure is, and then go get it.

But such a mission will not be easy. If the PCs are new to the area, the sage explains that Sumbar is in the midst of the Pirate Isles, so named for the obvious reason. Moreover, the waters in the isles are inhabited by fell creatures of the deep. Finally, the Oracle itself is reputed to give very cryptic answers. Few people have ever visited the Oracle and gotten any information worth talking about, and fewer still have left the island alive due to the shifting reefs. Nicodemus rustles around in some papers and produces a map of the Sea of Fallen Stars and another one of the Pirate Isles (see page 23). He also suggests that the PCs hire a ship to take them all there.

Although it is obvious that selling the rutter will not raise the funds to help Aunt Marla, it should now be apparent that the book is potentially far more valuable as a guide to reaching the Oracle at Sumbar. If the PCs do not visit the Oracle, the adventure ends with the Earl of Culhane forcing Aunt Marla to give up her shop in payment of the debt. Her son, Spunk, will never be seen again.

The PCs should decide to go to Sumbar. They must make travel arrangements soon, because it is already midway into the first ride of Mirtul and Sumbar is about 225 miles away. There is barely enough time to get there, with no delays and favorable winds.

Only two ships are in port: the longship *Arrow* and the caravel *Pride of Procampur*. These ships are tied up at the city docks, with crewmen unloading cargo, painting, and doing other maintenance. The crews of both ships look tough and muscular, although those of the *Arrow* appear to be more serious and grim. If the PCs inquire for the master of either vessel, the crewmen will direct them to Reldegar's Roost, a seamy pub right by the docks.

Pride of Procampur

Base Movement: 4
Emergency Move: 5
Crew: See below
Armor Rating: 9
Seaworthiness: 70%
Saving Throw: Thick wood
Power Type: Sail
Cargo Tonnage: 180 tons
Keel Length: 70'
Beam Length: 20'
Armament: two light ballistae
  Range: 1/27
  Damage: 2d6 hp
  Crew: 1
  Rate of fire: 1/2
  THAC0: 16
  No chance for a critical hit

The *Pride of Procampur* is a caravel based on the Dragonisle. It appears to be a helpless merchantman, quite innocent looking with blue and white sails and a happy crew. Its master keeps the hold filled with extra weight to make it appear filled with rich cargo.

The band of cutthroats are the terror of the civilized nations that border the sea. The crew has been trained to dump the extra weight overboard (out of sight from approaching vessels) so that the ship can quickly maneuver to overtake prey. In the five years that the *Pride* has been plying the Sea of Fallen Stars, it has captured or destroyed 20 vessels and carried out several land raids. If it encounters another pirate ship, it unfurls a bright red flag with crossed black short swords to signal its identity.

The *Pride*'s captain is Rufus the Cruel, a native and former slave of Thay who escaped his hard life as an oarsman when the galley he was serving on was captured by pirates. The pirates allowed the slaves to put their former masters to death, and were astounded at the cruel tortures that Rufus inflicted before throwing the Thayvians (or what was left of them) overboard to the sharks.

Rufus decided that the pirate's life was better than any he had ever lived, and he has quickly risen through the ranks. Five years ago he became captain of the *Pride of Procampur*, after its former master mysteriously disappeared during a storm at sea. Rufus recently gained even greater respect among his crew and other pirates of the Fallen Stars by successfully recruiting Malificat, a priestess of Loviatar.

Rufus the Cruel (Miles Thoraker): AL NE; AC 2; MV 12; T8; hp 44; THAC0 17; #AT 2/1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 16; S 14, D 16, C 15, I 13, W 11, Ch 17; XP 2,000; *short sword of quickness +3, bracers of defense AC 4*. Rufus carries a sack with 10 caltrops (see *The Complete Thief's Handbook*, page 99), a potion of *invisibility*, and a *pouch of winds* (*PFS*, page 33), which comes in very handy when the ship is becalmed.

Rufus is 5' 10" tall, weighs 180 lbs., and has straw blond hair, soft blue eyes, and a winning, friendly smile.

Rufus's consort, Malificat, is a gorgeous blonde, green-eyed lady in her late twenties who has risen quickly among the priestesses of Loviatar. Prior to her joining the *Pride*'s crew, no priestess had ever gone to the pirate isles and risked exile. Recently, the grand matriarch of Loviatar determined that the wealth of the pirates needed to be "shared" to further the ends of the Maiden of Pain. Since there were so many worshipers in the isles (and so much opportunity to inflict pain), a missionary was needed and Malificat volunteered. She intends to play along with Rufus for a while, then establish herself as a matriarch among the pirates with an exquisite temple on Earthspur, erected with pirate wealth.

Malificat (Matilda Thoraker): AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; P7 (specialty priest of Loviatar); hp 50; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; ML 16; S 16, D 15, C 16, I 11, W 16, Ch 14; XP 2,000; scale mail, shield, *footman's flail +1*. Spells: *bless, cure light wounds, detect magic, faerie fire* (×2); *charm person or mammal, heat metal, hold person* (×2); *produce flame; cause blindness, prayer; cloak of fear; pain touch* (3×/day). In addition to her magical footman's flail, Matilda has been given a *white wand* by her goddess for all of the pain and suffering she has inflicted on mankind. The wand will absorb up to 10 levels of spells before dissolving. If anyone other than Matilda touches the wand, it dissolves like a melting icicle. (See *FRA*, page 24.)

Crew members (40): AL any evil; AC 6; MV 12; F3 (×4), F2 (×18), F1 (×18); hp 30 (F3), 20 (F2), 9 (F1); THAC0 18, 19, or 20; #AT by weapon type; Dmg by weapon type; ML 13; XP 270, 120, or 65; studded leather armor, small shields. One 3rd-level fighter, five 2nd-level fighters, and 10 1st-level fighters are skilled heavy crossbowmen; the balance are skilled with spears, belaying pins, cutlasses, and daggers. Four 3rd-level fighters are specialized with the cutlass. The crew rates as crack.

Ogres, shock troops (4): INT low; AL CE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1; hp 28 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10 (+2); SZ L; ML 12; XP 270; MM/272.

The Sea Captains

Reldegar's Roost is a disreputable-looking place that exudes the pungent aroma of rum. The scarred, mismatched tables and benches are made of thick wood. Above the bar, a stout club with a bronzed end hangs from hooks below a sign that says "No Fighting! Take it Outside!"

A heavyset man in his early sixties tends the bar. Bill is a tough retired sailor who is out to make money and puts up with little horseplay. When the PCs inquire about the captains of the two ships in port, Bill says, "Don't know. I don't sell information, just drinks and grub. Now if you don't want any, just get on out."

Barnacle Bill: AL LN; AC 10; MV 12; F4; hp 25; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 17; ML 13.

If the PCs place an order, the barman points to two different tables. Near the windows, a young blond couple dressed in crisp blue shirts and pants are talking happily and enjoying their meal. In a dimly lit corner, two sinister-looking men dressed totally in black are quietly discussing something they don't want anyone to overhear. One of the men has a long gray beard and a staff. The other is younger (about 35 or so), with a bandanna, an eye patch, and a raven perched on his left shoulder.

The young blond couple look up in surprise when the PCs approach, but they listen to the PCs' request carefully. The man and woman introduce themselves as Captain Miles Thoraker of the *Pride of Procampur* and his wife Matilda. They say they are merchants, in port to pick up a load of Sembian glassware. For a flat fee of 400 gp plus crew costs (6 gp per crew member, for an additional 240 gp), they will gladly take the PCs to Sumbar. They are willing to make the trip because Sumbar is not far out of their way, and they would like to see this mysterious island and its Oracle. They regret charging so much, but the trip does require taking some risks. The Pirate Isles are well named, and the reefs around Sumbar are reputed to be treacherous.

A PC who manages to cast a *detect evil* spell on this couple can sense a faint glimmer of evil emanating from the lady, because she is strongly aligned. Though the captain will try to prevent spellcasting, a *know alignment* spell reveals that Miles is neutral evil

Arrow

Base Movement: 5/2
Emergency Move: 6/13
Crew: See below
Armor Rating: 8
Seaworthiness: 60%
Saving Throw: Thin wood
Power Type: Sail and oars
Cargo Tonnage: 50 tons
Keel Length: 80'
Beam Length: 15'
Armament: Medium ballista
  Range: 3/30
  Damage: 3d6 hp
  Crew: 2
  Rate of fire: 1/3
  THAC0: 14
  Critical hit on 20
Special Equipment: The bow of the *Arrow* is equipped with a corvus, a boarding ramp that has a curved heavy iron hook on the end. The ramp is held in the raised position until the opposing ship has been rammed. When its ropes are released, the ramp drops and the hook smashes through the deck of the enemy ship. *Arrow*'s boarders charge across the ramp (less risky than swinging over on lines or jumping from one ship to another).
Ram: Yes

The *Arrow* is a longship with a home port in Suzail. It looks like a typical longship except for its arrowhead-shaped ram. The ram is made of heavy enchanted metal (+1 to ramming attacks) and is concealed 3' below the water line (5' below with a full cargo). *Arrow*'s sail is not of rich Cormyrean purple but a plain white sailcloth with no particular design; when at sea, the longship flies the Sembian flag. The *Arrow* looks like nothing more than a fat, unsuspecting merchantman, but she is really a heavily armed privateer filled with a ferocious crew. Captain Seldar ceremonially notches the ship's mast each time the *Arrow* and her crew destroy or capture a pirate vessel; the mast currently has 14 such notches.

Seldar is a knighted paladin in the service of the king of Cormyr. When his brother was lost to pirates in the Sea of Fallen Stars, he obtained permission to become a privateer with one goal in mind: bringing as many pirates to justice as possible, and killing those who were unwilling to face a fair trial. Seldar is human, in his mid forties, with gray-flecked brown hair and narrowly spaced blue eyes. He is 5'9" tall, weighs 150 lbs., and is usually disguised in a black robe that conceals his armor. To make his appearance more sinister, he wears a black eyepatch and a black bandanna. His pet trained crow, Bloodbeak, perches on his shoulder at sea and on land.

The ship's navigator is a wizard named Throxis, who is in his early fifties and has just as strong a desire to rid the sea of pirates as does Seldar. When Throxis was a child, his merchant father was financially ruined when a ship bearing a consignment of precious cargo was lost, and Throxis was forced to grow up in poverty. Like Seldar, Throxis is human and dresses all in black. He has a long gray beard and hair, and piercing gray eyes. The navigator is 6'2" tall and weighs 200 lbs.

Throxis appears to be a man of few words because he often concentrates on others' thoughts with his *medallion of ESP*. This device, plundered from the smoking body of a red wizard of Thay in a battle long ago, has proven very valuable on many occasions.

The *Arrow*'s crew is fanatically loyal to Seldar and Throxis. Each crew member has been personally interviewed and cleared by the captain. All are fighters or paladins just beginning their adventuring careers. The only exceptions are Father Benson, a priest of Torm, and his acolyte, Sister Jamie. All of the crew dress in black, loose-fitting garments that can be quickly augmented with studded leather corselets, shields, and weapons.

Seldar: AL LG; AC 3; MV 12; Paladin 6; hp 55; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 18; S 18/11, D 15, C 12, I 11, W 14, Ch 17; SD +2 to all saving rolls, lay on hands for 12 hp curing, cure disease twice per week, *detect evil* 60' radius, immune to disease, *protection from evil* aura. Seldar wears *chain mail +1* under his black robes and carries a *long sword +2* as well as a *dagger +1*. He wears a holy symbol of Torm beneath his clothing.

Throxis: AL LG; AC 8; MV 12; W8; hp 26; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; ML 17; S 10, D 13, C 14, I 17, W 13, Ch 12. Spells: *affect normal fires, magic missile* (×2), *spider climb; invisibility, levitate, web; dispel magic, fireball, fly; polymorph self, ship invisibility* (see page 22). Throxis carries a *ring of protection +2*, a potion of *extra-healing*, a *medallion of ESP*, and a *staff +2*. Throxis' spellbook contains many other spells of levels 1-4. (The contents of the spellbook can be determined by the DM, but one of the spells is *water breathing*).

Father Benson: AL LG; AC 6; MV 12; P5; hp 29; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; ML 15; S 12, D 15, C 13, I 12, W 15, Ch 11; scale armor. Spells: *bless, cure light wounds* (×3), *light; aid, chant, charm person or mammal, hold person; water breathing.* Father Benson carries a silver holy symbol of Torm, a *mace +1*, and a potion of *extra-healing.*

Sister Jamie: AL LG; AC 7; MV 12; P2; hp 13; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; ML 16; S 16, D 12, C 16, I 11, W 16, Ch 15; ring mail. Spells: *bless, cure light wounds* (×2), *protection from evil.* Sister Jamie is armed with a flail, and she carries two potions of *healing.*

Crew members (37): AL LG, NG; AC 8; MV 12; F3 (×3), F2 (×6), Paladin 1 (×2), F1 (×26); hp 25 (F3), 18 (F2), 10 (Pal 1), 8 (F1); THAC0 18, 19, or 20; #AT by weapon type; Dmg by weapon type; ML 14; XP 175, 120, 120, or 65; leather armor. Four of the 2nd-level fighters and 10 of the 1st-level fighters are archers. The balance are skilled with javelins, belaying pins, long swords, and daggers. The crew rates as trained.

and Matilda is chaotic evil. Indeed, she is a specialty priestess of Loviatar and her real name is Malificat. Her handsome lover is part of the problem within the Pirate Isles. He is also known as Rufus the Cruel, so named for the ruthless murders and mayhem he has committed on the Inner Sea. These two would like nothing better than to get to Sumbar so they can ask the Oracle to identify the wealthiest ship traveling the Sea this year. For statistics, see the *"Pride of Procampur"* sidebar on page 20.

The duo in black appear disinterested if approached by the PCs. The two men say, "Sure, you can sit down if you like. It doesn't matter to us." The one with the raven calls himself Seldar, the master of the *Arrow*. Speaking with him may be unnerving, because each time he turns his head to talk to the PCs, the raven (named Bloodbeak) turns its head and stares intently at the person being addressed. The other fellow is known as Throxis, and he doesn't say much.

Seldar states that he has just dropped off a load of wine from Westgate and bought a load of timber that he hopes to resell in Cormyr for a tidy profit. He is not interested in fooling around in the Pirate Isles unless the pay is right (500 gp plus an additional 300 gp for the crew). He does mention that his crew is well trained, and that it might be easier to get through Sumbar's reefs using his longship's oars rather than risking using the sails.

A *detect evil* spell reveals that neither of the men in black is strongly aligned. A *know alignment* spell reveals that, despite their sinister appearance, Seldar and Throxis are lawful good. Seldar is a paladin and Throxis is a wizard, both in the service of the king of Cormyr. They ply the waters of the Inner Sea, appearing to be merchants or smugglers, but they are really privateers who prey on pirates. To maintain their cover, they will not openly display their alignment.

Throxis is quiet during the conversation because he is concentrating on reading the PCs' minds with his *medallion of ESP.* Once he figures out that their goal is to help a lady in trouble, he quietly takes Seldar to the side, explains the situation, and persuades the captain to lower his price to 250 gp plus 250 gp more for the crew. For Seldar's and Throxis' statistics, see the *"Arrow"* sidebar on page 21.

Even if the PCs don't approach the Cormyrians, Throxis will still be aware of their quest. He is concentrating on Miles's and Matilda's thoughts and will pry into the minds of any who join them at their table. The *Arrow* did not stop in Yhaunn accidentally. Seldar's current mission is to catch Rufus the Cruel and bring him to justice. As the *Arrow* made port, Seldar recognized the pirate's ship. To maintain his cover, the paladin decided to delay any action until Rufus's ship set sail. Then the *Arrow* would follow the *Pride of Procampur* to the open sea and capture the pirate where there would be no witnesses or diplomatic entanglements.

To meet the deadline for paying Aunt Marla's note, the PCs must take passage on either the *Arrow* or *Pride of Procampur*. If they go to Sumbar with Miles, they are followed the whole time by the *Arrow*, which is under a *ship invisibility* spell cast by Throxis. (See the sidebar on this page.) If the adventurers choose to go to Sumbar with Seldar and they have shown the rutter to Miles, they are followed discreetly by the *Pride of Procampur*, which is just fine with Seldar. (See "Concluding the Adventure.")

Visiting the Earl

The PCs may decide to go to the Earl of Culhane and ask for pity on Aunt Marla. This should be a good role-playing situation for the DM to develop if it occurs. The earl should be at least four levels higher than the highest-level PC, with a very strong entourage of men-at-arms in a very stout keep just outside of town. He receives the PCs graciously but is not in a mood to forgive the debt. He took a very great risk placing the wager with Spunk and was relieved when he won. The expenses of his men-at-arms, castle upkeep, taxes, regular offerings to the church, and a large family are high, and winning this wager put him in the black for the first time in five years. If the PCs offer the earl a substantial payment on the note (at least 1,000 gp), he will extend the payment period for 30 days.

Travel to Sumbar

Just before the party boards the chosen ship, Nicodemus insists on going back to his shop to get his pack and some "important materials." He asks two strong-looking PCs to help him. When they rendezvous with the others at the ship, Nicodemus's helpers are lugging a large sea chest filled with changes of clothes, adventuring equipment, and lots of books. ("I've got to bring something along to read on such a long voyage," Nicodemus explains.)

Sumbar lies some 225 miles southeast of Yhaunn. The winds at this time of year are favorable for either sailing or oared travel. No random encounters occur on the voyage, although the DM may wish to include a few if he wants more swashbuckling action. *Pirates of the Fallen Stars* is filled with ideas for random encounters in this area of the Forgotten Realms, including monsters, sea creatures, natural hazards, and rogues. The DM may also wish to flesh out the ship's crew so that there is

Ship Invisibility
(Illusion/Phantasm)
Level 4

Range: Touch
Components: V,S,M
Duration: 24 hours
Casting Time: 2 rounds
Area of Effect: Ship touched
Saving Throw: None

By means of this spell, a wizard can cause the ship he is aboard to become *invisible* along with all its equipment and all creatures aboard. While the spell is in effect, creatures aboard ship can see and hear each other and the ship itself, but creatures not aboard can see or hear nothing. A clever watch, however, may notice the wake of an *invisible* ship, disruption of water by the oars of an *invisible* ship, or other clues. People or things that fall overboard become visible; anybody or anything coming aboard become *invisible*. The spell is negated when anyone on board ship engages in any attack against anyone or anything outside the ship. Traveling at ramming speed for more than two rounds will also terminate the spell.

This spell is treasured among wizards who adventure on the Sea of Fallen Stars, and knowledge of its casting is closely guarded. The material components of the spell are a splinter from the deck of the ship to be made *invisible* and the tentacle of a jellyfish.

ample opportunity for role-playing.

Eventually, the PCs arrive at Sumbar and must advise the ship's navigator how to approach the island through the dangerous reefs, using the secret instructions from the rutter. The captain of the vessel may want to look at the book to verify the directions, but even if shown the rutter, neither Seldar nor Miles can read it. As an extra precaution, the captain sends rowboats ahead to take soundings (dropping weighted lines to measure the depth of the water).

The rutter proves to be absolutely correct; the reefs are not moving and there is a clear path past them all the way to the shore. When the reefs have been cleared and the ship is close to shore, the captain drops anchor, and the PCs are taken ashore by rowboat.

Once ashore, the captain offers to go along with a few men "to provide security," but the PCs probably will want to visit the Oracle by themselves. The captain makes no objection to this; after all, it is what the PCs paid for. Moreover, each captain has a potion of *invisibility* that allows him to follow the PCs to the Oracle. If the *Arrow* has been following the PCs' ship, Throxis casts *fly* and *invisibility* spells on himself and comes ashore to see what is happening.

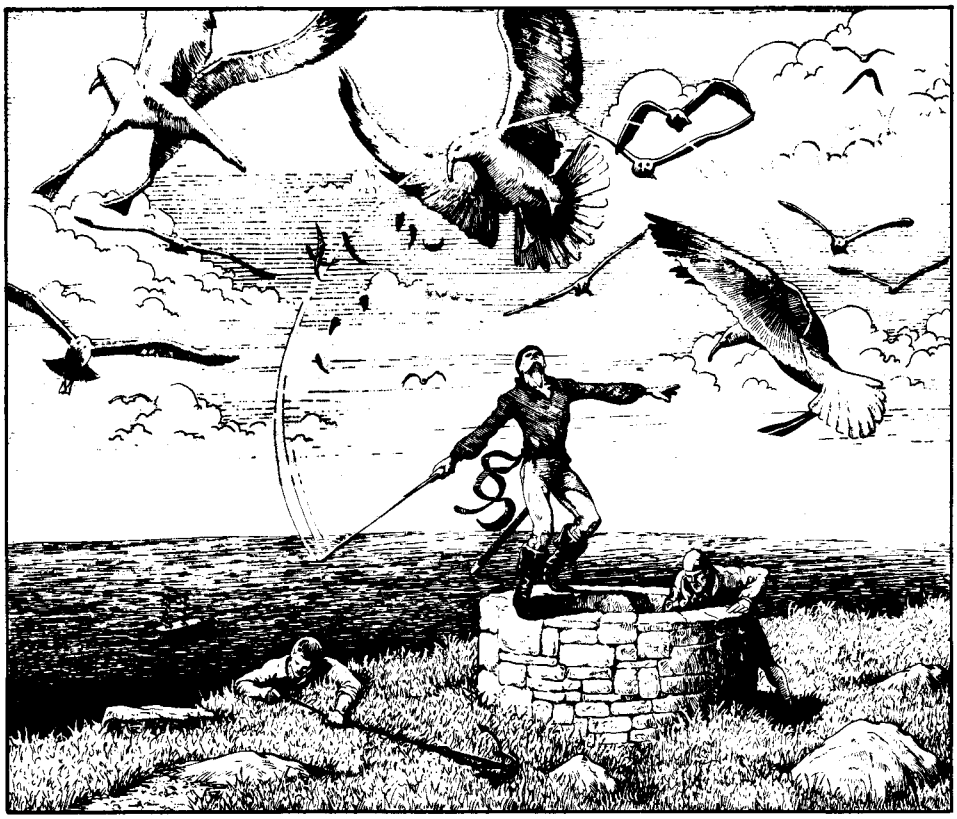
Nicodemus has heard rumors that the Oracle is on the east side of the island and lives at the bottom of a well. The island itself is lush with vegetation, full of howling monkeys, squawking birds, and an occasional growl from a predatory cat. The DM may wish to throw a scare into the PCs, but the party should run into no problems worse than slow movement through the undergrowth. Any DM using the optional rules for terrain effects on movement should assign a cost of 6 (medium jungle) for overland movement. The PCs can save a lot of time by walking around the island along the beach (movement cost of 1) or by rowing around the island. (The nearest reefs are a quarter mile offshore, so they should pose no problem.)

The Oracle

Fifty yards from the eastern shore of Sumbar, a steep and treacherous ridge rises 120' above the beach. The bottom of the 200' long, 20' wide ridge is littered with bones, the remains of those who did not make the climb successfully. There are no remnants of clothing or equipment; others who came along picked the bodies clean. However, any PC who searches the area for three or more turns can find a *wand of metal and mineral detection* wedged between two rocks. The wand has 44 charges remaining.

Unless the PCs have a way to fly to the top of the ridge, they must climb it. (See the *Player's Handbook*, pages 122-123, for climbing rules). PCs with rope use and mountaineering nonweapon proficiencies will find them handy in this situation. Each PC should receive a +25% climbing modifier because the ridge slopes inward.

When the first PC gets halfway up the ridge, two huge predatory sea gulls arrive to see what kinds of tasty morsels have arrived. The birds' ear-piercing screeches draw an additional big gull every round until there are a total of eight. Climbing PCs suffer disadvantages during combat: The gulls get +3 to attack rolls (being "on higher ground," with the defenders off-balance). The PCs get no armor-class bonuses for Dexterity or shields. Furthermore, a PC in combat still has to make a successful climbing check whenever he attacks or is hit. Any loud or



explosive spell (*fireball* or *lightning bolt*, for example) will drive the gulls away, screeching angrily.

Sea gulls, huge (8): INT animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 1, fly 24; HD 1; hp 7 (×4), 6 (×2), 5 (×2); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA 15% chance of inflicting disease; SD not surprised; SZ M (4′-6′ wingspan); ML 12; XP 35 each; new monster.

Once atop the ridge, the PCs can easily find the Oracle at the center of the plateau. The Oracle appears to be a plain stone well, 6′ diameter and enclosed by a 3′-high stone wall. The well has no bucket, rope, or covering roof, but the word "Nasmen" is etched on one of the top stones. The well shaft goes down into darkness. If the PCs think to drop a lit torch down the well, the light falls for what seems like forever, until it is so far away that it seems to wink out. Nicodemus becomes greatly excited and thumbs through one of the thick books he has been toting in his backpack. Then he says, "Ah! Here it is! According to legend, all we need to do is toss in a valuable object and ask the whereabouts of Immurk's lost treasure!"

Role-playing the Oracle

The Oracle itself can be anything the DM wants it to be: the spirit of an imprisoned lesser deity, an interplanar gate to a nether plane, or whatever suits the DM's campaign. No explanation need be given to the PCs. All they have to do is listen to Nicodemus's clues and ask the right question.

The DM, however, has to know how the Oracle works. First, each person may ask only one question in a lifetime (including any resurrections). Second, before the Oracle will answer the question, the PC has to throw a sacrifice into the well. Anything object will do, even a single copper piece (or a lit torch!), but Nicodemus has heard the prevalent rumor that a valuable object must be tossed in. If no sacrifice is made before a question is asked, an imp emerges from the well and attacks the questioner.

If a PC makes the required sacrifice and asks the whereabouts of Immurk's lost treasure, the Oracle answers with the cryptic response detailed on page 25. If some other question is asked, the DM should treat the Oracle as a *contact other plane* spell for an outer planar entity with an Intelligence of 20 (+1 for each 1,000-gp value of the sacrifice). Both the knowledge (75%) and veracity (73%) rolls must be successful for the entity to give a clear prediction. Otherwise, it gives an ambiguous answer. There is no chance for insanity to strike the questioner when questioning the Oracle, but if the insanity roll (40%) succeeds, the entity gives an answer that leads the questioner to his greatest doom. In any case, only one question may be asked per person, and the Oracle is not limited to single-word answers.

Situation A: Thorgrunch the pirate approaches the Oracle and asks when and where the richest treasure ship will be a month from now.

Sadly, Thorgrunch neglected to make a sacrifice, so the Oracle does not respond. An imp emerges from the depths of the well and attacks Thorgrunch, who must fight for his life.

Situation B: Thorgrunch has heard many rumors about the Oracle, so he drops a jewel-hilted dagger down the well as a sacrifice before asking his question. The DM secretly rolls percentile dice three times.

The first roll (knowledge) is 71, the second roll (veracity) is 03, and the third roll (insanity) is 44. Both the knowledge and veracity rolls are successful, so the Oracle answers correctly: "The Cormyrean treasure ship *Porpoise* will be five miles east of Yhaunn exactly one month from now." If Thorgrunch ensures that he is off the coast of Yhaunn on the appointed day, and if his attack against the *Porpoise* is successful, he will be rich beyond his wildest dreams.

Situation C: Thorgrunch makes the required sacrifice and asks the same question as in Situation B. The DM's first two rolls are 88 and 19. (Since one of the two first rolls misses, the third roll is irrelevant.) The Oracle answers ambiguously: "The richest ship will be in the sea, hoping to make port in an hour or so." Thorgrunch will be very frustrated not knowing exactly where to find the treasure ship.

Situation D: Again, Thorgrunch makes a sacrifice and asks about the location of the richest ship. The DM's three rolls are 10, 69, and 30. The knowledge and veracity rolls are successful, but so also is the roll for insanity (in this case, inspiring the PC to act in a way that brings the

greatest doom). The Oracle states: "The richest reward awaits he who is ten miles southeast of Suzail in exactly one month." Thorgrunch ensures that he is where the Oracle recommends, but on the appointed day he is attacked by three Cormyrean privateers and is captured. The three Cormyrean captains congratulate each other as they share the bounty for Thorgrunch's head and sell his ship for a tidy sum, the richest reward they have ever had.

The DM must listen carefully to the PCs' conversation near the well; if anyone asks a question before the sacrifice ("How should we phrase this question?"), the Oracle responds by sending up an imp to attack the irreverent visitors.

Imp: INT average; AL LE; AC 2; MV 6, fly 18 (A); HD 2+2; hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA stinger poison (save vs. poison or die), *detect good, detect magic,* become *invisible* at will, use *suggestion* once per day; SD resist spell attacks as if 7-HD monster; hit only by silver or magical weapons; immune to cold, fire, electricity; regenerate 1 hp per round; MR 25%; SZ T (2' tall); ML 10; XP 1,400; MM/201.

The first time an imp comes up, it does so in **giant rat** form (AC 7, Dmg 1-3 with 5% chance of disease). The "rat" becomes *invisible* when threatened, then visible again when it attacks. If the imp is destroyed, it disappears in a noxious puff of red and violet smoke. A second imp (if the PCs make the same mistake) appears in **large spider** form (AC 8, Dmg 1, SA type A poison). A third mistake gets an imp in its natural form. If the PCs can't seem to figure out what's going on, a kind DM may have Nicodemus yell out, "Don't ask any more questions until a sacrifice is made!"

When a PC asks the Oracle where to find Immurk's treasure, omit the dice rolling of the *contact other plane* spell. The Oracle will always respond to this question in a deep, metallic voice:

"Immurk the Invincible went with riches all captured to the egg of the isles just south of the jaws thence 50 yards due south to the cracked egg thence to a grotto beneath his watery realm. There it may be found if thou makest the right choice. But beware of the monsters unbreathing and invisible strings that kill when they sting. And the master himself will protect that of the King. All of it's under a room, not in it you see, and while there's plenty for all, there's not as much as you think."

Nicodemus looks perplexed at this response and states that he has never heard of "the egg of the isles," "the cracked egg," or "the jaws." If the PCs don't think of it, he pulls out his map (see page 23), looks at it, and shakes his head mournfully. Eventually, one of the PCs should notice The Jaws Strait on the map and see that a small island south of it is shaped like an egg.

As the adventurers climb down the ridge, a few more of the huge sea gulls come within a hundred feet of them but do not attack. Leaving Sumbar should pose no problem, and there will be no random encounters on the way to the Egg (about 50 miles) unless the DM wants to insert some.

The Underwater Grotto

When the ship arrives at the Egg, there may be a bit of confusion about "the cracked egg" mentioned by the Oracle. If the PCs sail around to the south side of the island, the low tide exposes a large oval rock 50 yards offshore. When the PCs approach within 30' of the rock, they can see a 6"-wide crack along its middle. The crack can't be opened farther unless one of the PCs has a scroll with a *transmute rock to mud* spell.

As the PCs make preparations to visit the "grotto beneath his watery realm," the captain asks what they intend to do, but he won't push the inquiry. The captain, who followed the PCs *invisibly* to the Oracle and heard everything, knows what the PCs are up to. He may want to insist on increased payment for the additional risk, creating an interesting role-playing opportunity.

If the PCs have taken passage on the *Pride of Procampur,* Miles and Matilda intend to murder the adventurers on their return with the treasure. If the *Arrow* was hired, Seldar will allow the PCs to retrieve the treasure but intends to claim anything that rightfully belongs to Cormyr. Unless the PCs have an *ESP* spell, they should not know the captain's plans.

The PCs may not have a way to survive underwater (such as *water breathing* spells, *helms of underwater action,* etc.). If the adventurers need help, Nicodemus reaches into a pouch and produces several curious items that look like dried tadpoles and smell like strong salt. He tells the adventurers that these magical pills bestow the power to breathe water up to four hours per day, "assuming they work." Nicodemus developed the pills for an adventurer who never came to pick them up, so they have never been tested. He has two pills per PC and is reasonably sure they will work. In fact they do work, but for only one hour plus 1-6 turns per pill. The duration of the effect expires whenever the user is out of the water for five or more rounds.

Nicodemus begs off from exploring the sea bottom with the PCs, citing his age and arthritis as good reasons not to go. (Both excuses are bogus; he is frightened of going underwater.)

Underwater Exploration

Before the PCs enter the sea, the DM should carefully note what spells, armor, and weapons they are carrying, and should also review page 79 of the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide (DMG).*

The ship can safely approach the "cracked egg," and the PCs can go right over the side. Once below the surface of the water, they enter a new world of brightly colored fish, softly waving sea plants, and dim light. Those in armor sink to the bottom (50' below the surface) where they can see in a 50' radius.

Although no encounters occur on the sea floor, the DM should mention that the PCs can see a large shark swimming close to the surface. If the PCs take cover or hide, the shark does not notice them. If the PCs attack the shark, it swims away quickly. The shark is really Throxis, who jumped into the water and cast his *polymorph self* spell so he could follow the PCs. He will stay within 90' of the PCs (the range of his *medallion of ESP*), but he will not aid them. Throxis' mission is to observe where the PCs go and what dangers they encounter. If they are killed, he will cast a *water breathing* spell on himself, Seldar, and several of *Arrow*'s crew members to finish the quest.

At the sea bottom is a small underwater hillock made of very hard rock (the lower part of the "cracked egg"). A natural cave entrance in the rock slopes up gently. There are no apparent traps around the cave entrance, just lots of

seaweed that clings to the rock. The floor of the cave opening is also made of rock, though a lot of sand has covered the stone in the first 10′ of the entrance tunnel. The cave is about 12′ wide and 12′ tall, just enough room for two PCs to walk or swim side by side.

1. Fork *(". . . if thou makest the right choice.")* When the PCs get 40′ into the cave, the slope levels out and a side passage veers off to the left. If the PCs recall the Oracle's cryptic message, they may reason from its words that it is best to take the right fork. Doing so avoids the undead in area 2.

2. Wrong Way *("But beware of the monsters unbreathing . . .")* Exploration of the left fork is a big mistake. The sound of any PC heading into this part of the cave will echo through the water to the chamber at the end. Here, five undead sahuagin summoned by Immurk's cleric have only one duty: to destroy all intruders into this part of the cavern.

Two rounds after anyone enters the left-hand tunnel, the undead attack, swimming lazily toward the PCs. They approach en masse: two of the sahuagin swim side by side about 3′ from the tunnel bottom, and two more float above them, about 8′ from the tunnel bottom. The two monsters on the bottom attack the first rank of PCs while the two on top swim over the first rank and dive into the second rank of PCs. The last sahuagin patiently waits his turn at the rear until one of his comrades is destroyed. If the PCs are divided at the fork, he can add his weight to any opening in the adventurers' defense.

The first four sahuagin don't give much of a clue that they are undead, except for their lazy swimming. A front-rank PC who makes an Intelligence check with a −8 penalty may notice that the last sahuagin, which is extremely large (9′ tall), is missing a hand and one eye. Once this monster begins to melee with a PC, however, the missing limb and eye will be obvious.

Sahuagin zombies (4): INT non; AL N; AC 5; MV 9, swim 12; HD 2+2; hp 18, 16, 15 (×2); THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-4; SD immune to cold, poison, and mind-affecting spells; SZ M (6′ tall); ML special; XP 120; MM/306, 373 (variant monster).

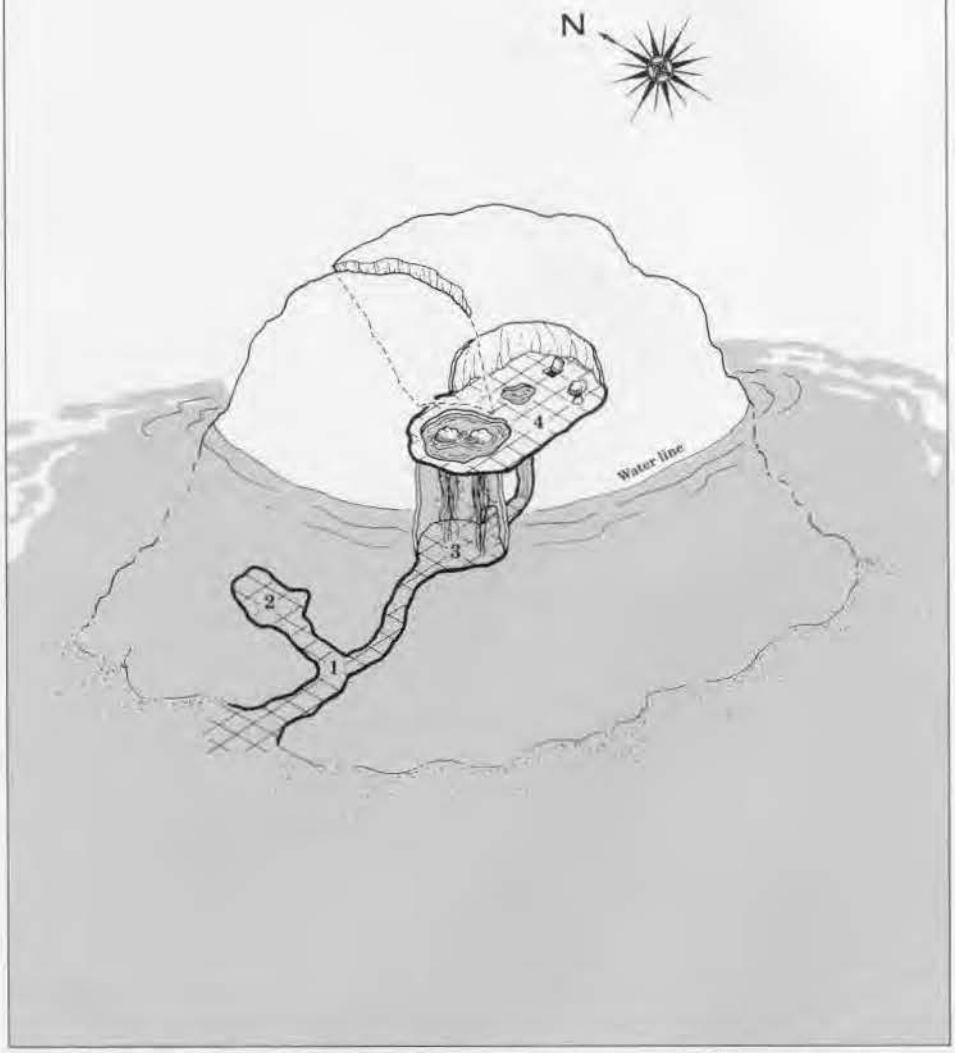
Large sahuagin zombie: HD 6; hp 36; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 4-16 (claw), 2-12 bite; SD turned as wraith, immune to cold, poison, mind-affecting spells; SZ L (9′ tall); XP 975; other statistics as for sahuagin zombies.

Several simple tactics will help the PCs if they become involved with these undead. Uncorking or smashing a bottle of holy water will not harm the zombies but will keep them at bay for one (uncorking) or two (smashing) rounds. A *continual light* spell will cause the monsters to moan hollowly and attack with a −2 penalty; they will focus their attacks on the PC who holds the light. If successfully turned, the undead sahuagin retreat to their lair. If the PCs leave a *continual light* spell blocking the passage after turning the sahuagin zombies, the undead will not re-emerge. There is no treasure in the lair.

3. Wide Chamber *(". . . and invisible strings that kill when they sting.")* This circular cave has a diameter of 30′ and is 30′ high. Across the expanse of floor, the tunnel continues on, rising steeply. If the PCs shine a light into this chamber before they enter, the ceiling appears to be perfectly flat. A PC who finds this very odd is entitled to an Intelligence check. Success indicates

The Underwater Grotto

1 square = 10′



that the PC has figured out that the flat ceiling is really the water line below an air pocket. Any PC who examines the inside of the chamber closely is entitled to a percentage roll. If the roll is above 90, the PC sees many transparent, stringy tentacles hanging vertically in the water. The tentacles reach all the way to the water line above, where two blobby shapes are barely visible on the surface. A *detect invisibility* spell will also reveal the tentacles.

The indistinct shapes are giant Portuguese men-o-war, descendants of two that Immurk's priest transported to this chamber by magical means. The tentacles are poisoned and reach all the way down to the floor. These creatures have survived by eating the occasional fish that wandered into this chamber and blundered into the tentacles.

The creatures will not attack until someone enters the tentacled area, but they can be easily killed from a distance with *magic missiles, lightning bolts,* and the like. However, even if the creatures are destroyed, dozens of their poisonous tentacles continue to float throughout the chamber, preventing access to the tunnel on the other side. The DM should be lenient if the PCs come up with ingenious means to avoid the obstacle. One method might involve covering every part of the PCs' bodies with armor, clothing, gloves, etc. and then walking through. If a small part is left uncovered, the DM should assign a chance that the unprotected area will contact a tentacle.

For example, a PC in armor, pants, boots, jacket, gloves, helmet, and wrapping around the head should have no more than a 1% chance to be struck by a tentacle. A wizard with several *levitate* spells could lift the men-o-war bodies (and thus their tentacles) so that the PCs can crawl or swim safely across the floor.

Other possibilities include the use of pole arms to clear the way or clever use of *unseen servants* or *Tenser's floating discs* to push open a safe lane for the PCs. The safest course is to wait for high tide, when the men-o-war will rise with the water level and the PCs can walk or swim right under the tentacles. If the PCs come up with these or other good ideas, the DM should assign a reasonable chance of success.

Portuguese man-o-war, giant (2): INT non; AL N; AC 9; MV swim 1; HD 3; hp 20 each; THAC0 N/A; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA poisonous tentacles (save vs. paralyzation or be paralyzed and devoured in 3-12 turns); SD transparency; SZ L (7½' diameter with 30 tentacles each); ML N/A; XP 420; MM1/79.

4. Treasure Chamber *("And the master himself will protect that of the King. All of it's under a room, not in it . . .")* The tunnel continues to rise sharply and emerges into a cave chamber with an air pocket. The air seems fresh, and there are tiny holes in the ceiling that allows sunlight to filter into the chamber (from the "crack in the egg"). Two giant men-o-war (see area 3) float on top of a pool of water at the west end of the cave. PCs with rope and grapnel or similar devices can carefully pull the creatures ashore so that the everyone can exit safely through the tunnel.

After he hid his treasure, Immurk left an old broken sea chest and rusty, broken padlock in plain sight, to make trespassers think that his treasure had already been found. The chest sits beside an open steel trap door set into the rocky ground. A bit to the south, a large rock formation resembling a toadstool stands in a patch of sand. (When describing this area, the DM should be sure to say "toadstool," not "mushroom.")

This rock formation is the "room" ("mushroom") under which Immurk's lost treasure is stored. If the PCs push over the cap and stem of the mushroom, they see a chest sitting in the hole beneath.

Before anyone can make a move for the chest, the sand beside the hole erupts, and a green-skinned clawed hand grabs the ankle of the closest PC! A grisly being emerges, wrapped in decayed linens. It attacks fiercely with its long sharp claws and elongated piercing teeth while emitting a horridly putrid stench.

This creature is none other than Immurk himself. His evil was so great that, after his burial at sea, he became a ghast. Knowing that rumors of his fabled hoard would attract treasure hunters, Immurk swam all the way back to this island from his watery grave and buried himself under the sand, determined that no one would get his precious treasure. Immurk fights to the death. If turned he flees, summoning the undead monsters in area 2 to cover his retreat; the sahuagin zombies arrive and attack the PCs four rounds later.

Immurk is a horribly evil ghast dedicated to defending his treasure. After 1-6 turns, the effect of clerical turning wears off, and he goes after any trespasser who remain. While attacking, the ghast repeatedly screams in a gurgling voice, "Leave my treasure alone! Thieves, you will die!"

Immurk (ghast): INT very; AL CE; AC 4; MV 15, swim 12; HD 4; hp 32; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8; SA paralyzation, stench 10' radius (save vs. poison or attack at −2); SD immune to *sleep, charm,* and other mental spells; immune to *protection from evil* spells unless used with cold iron; SZ M; ML 14; XP 650, MM/131 (Ghoul). All of Immurk's treasure is in the chest; he has no treasure on his person.

If the surviving PCs examine the chest and its hiding place before pulling out the treasure, they can see an unholy symbol of Cyric lying next to the chest. This is the talisman that Immurk's cleric used when he cast a *glyph of warding* on this chest; Immurk slew him thereafter and the unholy symbol fell, unnoticed. Anyone who touches the chest without speaking the name of the glyph will go blind (save vs. spell to negate the effect totally). The watertight chest is locked; so much rust that has accumulated over the years that there is a −15% penalty to a thief's chance to open locks.

The treasure inside is indeed worth all the trouble that the PCs had getting to it. Wrapped in a purple satin cloth is a gorgeous platinum and gold crown set with rubies, pearls, and fire opals. The centerpiece of the crown is an ebony oval etched with a purple dragon. A PC with heraldry proficiency (or a native Cormyrean) can determine that this is the symbol of the nation of Cormyr. This dazzling treasure is the lost coronation crown of Palaghard I of Cormyr. It was stolen early in Immurk's career and nearly led to a war between Procampur and Cormyr. (See *Pirates of the Fallen Stars,* page 7.) The crown is worth 75,000 gp.

The chest also contains 2,500 pp divided into five large bags; four gems (worth 2,000 gp, 1,500 gp (×2), and 1,000 gp); and six pieces of jewelry. Four of these items are necklaces of gold chain (value 500 gp (×2), 300 gp, and 250 gp). One is a golden brooch in the shape of a mermaid, with tiny emeralds set into her tail fin (value 2,500 gp). The last item is a gold ring engraved with waves going around the entire circumference. It is a *ring of water elemental*

metamorphosis that can *polymorph* the wearer into a water elemental. (See *Tome of Magic (TOM)*, pages 128-129.) The ring's command word, "Aqua regia," is engraved on the inside. The bottom layer of treasure is covered by a neatly folded leather cloak, a *cloak of the manta ray* (*DMG*, page 164). Below the cloak lies a razor-sharp *short sword +1, +3 vs. marine creatures*. The last items are a half-inch diameter ivory tube sealed with wax at both ends, and a leather packet totally coated in beeswax. The blow tube contains one use of *powder of coagulation* (*TOM*, page 127). The leather packet holds 10 pinches of *powder of magic detection* (*TOM*, pages 127-128). PCs who open these two items in this area must find some way to reseal them or the powder will get wet and spoil when the PCs enter the sea.

Once the PCs have explored the cavern, they should take their last *pill of water breathing* to get back out. The DM should note which PC has the *cloak of the manta ray* and if she is wearing it. (See the *DMG*, page 164.) No further encounters occur until the PCs return to their ship.

"There's not as much as you think."

The final encounter depends on which ship the PCs hired in Yhaunn. If the PCs hired the *Arrow*, skip this section and go directly to "An Offer You Can't Refuse." If they hired the *Pride of Procampur*, however, read the following to the players as the PCs are swimming up to the ship.

> This adventure is finally near completion. You have more than enough treasure to pay Aunt Marla's debt with plenty left over, plus several items that may be magical. As you approach your ship, however, you see the hull of another vessel rapidly approaching, propelled by oars that strike the water in unison. A long barbed ram protrudes from the prow of the approaching ship. The sound of an explosion and shouts reverberate through the water as the oared hull strikes the *Pride of Procampur*.

Throxis swam back to the *Arrow* and advised Seldar that the adventurers had obtained the treasure and were returning to their ship. Seldar decided to attack now so that the innocent PCs would not be harmed. The captain ordered his ship to ramming speed and, just before impact, Throxis unleashed a *fireball*.

When the PCs emerge from the water and can see what is going on, read the following to the players:

> You've been in some rough battles before, but nothing like this. The aft of your ship is totally engulfed in flames, which are spreading toward the rigging. The ram of the attacker is stuck into *Pride*'s hull on the starboard side.
>
> You recognize the *Arrow*, the longship that was in port in Yhaunn. A long gangplank has been dropped from the *Arrow* onto your ship, and sailors from the two vessels are locked in desperate combat. Leading *Arrow*'s black-clad crew is the one-eyed Captain Seldar, who swings mightily with a gleaming long sword. His pet raven is up in the rigging, cawing a warning whenever someone threatens Seldar from the rear.

Miles, Matilda, and a few crewmen are making a stand in the bow of the ship. Miles is holding Nicodemus in front of him like a shield, a short sword at the sage's throat. Matilda uttering some words while holding a medallion in one hand and gesturing with the other. On the deck of the *Arrow*, Seldar's second-in-command is posed with his arms up as if he were casting a spell, but he is perfectly frozen.

Suddenly one of the *Pride*'s deck hatches opens, and four large yellow-skinned humanoids emerge from the hold wielding two-handed swords. Matilda finishes her spell, sees the humanoids, and begins to laugh. If the PCs are close enough, they hear Miles shout "This is our payment for your betrayal, old man!" just before he kicks Nicodemus into the sea. Matilda laughs harder, and the four yellow-skinned beasts plow into the battle.

By now the PCs should realize that they picked the wrong ship to book passage on. Although the *Arrow* gained surprise and inflicted massive damage with the *fireball* and ram attack, the retaliation of the *Pride* has been quick. Malificat has successfully cast a *hold person* spell on Throxis, and Rufus sent for his four ogre shock troopers (who live in a secret compartment in the hold). The DM should allow the PCs to join in the battle as they desire. Nicodemus will drown (he swims like a rock) unless the PCs rescue him within three rounds.

Running the battle could be a lengthy affair with a lot of dice-rolling. To speed things up, two *Arrow* crewmen and one *Pride* crewman fall every round. (Six *Pride* crewmen are already dead from Throxis' fireball and another from a large ballista bolt.) Every fourth round, one of the ogres falls from wounds. Seldar falls in the sixth round.

Malificat has just finished casting her *prayer* spell by the time the PCs join battle. If she is not stopped, she will cast a *produce flame* spell, hurl it on Throxis, and laugh while he burns helplessly. When she becomes aware of the PCs, Malificat casts a *cloak of fear* spell, then a *cause blindness* spell, and attempts to touch one of the adventurers (inflicting simultaneously her *pain touch* and possibly *fear* and *blindness*; see page 20 for Malificat's abilities). If threatened seriously by a PC, she tries her *charm person* spell.

Rufus fights sneakily, always trying to backstab for triple damage. If seriously threatened, he calls the ogres over to help him.

When the battle is over, Seldar or Throxis can be revived quickly enough if they fell (they were unconscious), and the DM should proceed to the next section if the PCs survived the battle and were not captured. If the adventurers lost the fight, Rufus and Malificat relieve them of all their belongings, then make them walk the plank while the pirate leaders laugh as the sharks feast. (Rufus is called "the Cruel" for good reason.)

An Offer You Can't Refuse

This final scene should be played out when the PCs emerge from the water (if they hired the *Arrow* initially) or after Seldar and Throxis fully recover from their wounds (if the sea battle was fought). The following boxed text assumes that the PCs hired the *Arrow*, Seldar's ship, but it can be altered to fit whatever situation the PCs are in.

The crewmen help you on board from your trip beneath the waves, and you feel very relieved to be back in the sunshine and fresh air. Captain Seldar himself comes on deck and congratulates you on your effort. "You are going to be famous in the annals of Cormyrean history," Seldar says. "Do you realize that one of the objects you recovered is the long-lost coronation crown of Palaghard I? On behalf of the king I thank you, but you will have the opportunity to hear it yourself when we make port in Suzail. Now, if you don't mind, I would like to put the crown in a safe place." Seldar holds out his hand expectantly.

The PCs may raise all sorts of objections to this rather high-handed attitude toward their property, and may wonder just who the captain thinks he is and how he happens to know so much about what they found. If they ask, the right questions, Seldar reveals he is a privateer for the king of Cormyr, and the crown was lost long ago when it was stolen by Immurk the Invincible. Seldar insists that the crown is the rightful property of Cormyr, and that the PCs must hand it over without further question, adding that everything else they found they can certainly keep. PCs who insist on seeing Seldar's letters of marque (authorizing him to prey on pirate shipping) are allowed to do so, and Nicodemus (if he did not drown) can verify the authenticity of the documents. ("Yep, it's the seal of Cormyr, all right. And if that isn't the king's signature, it sure is the best forgery I've ever seen!")

PCs who try to bluff and say, "What crown?" get only a laugh from Seldar. The paladin says, "I've known your plans all along. Now stop the games. I know the crown is in (wherever a PC has put it; Throxis used his *medallion of ESP* to find the crown's location). My friend Throxis here has a way of knowing what people are thinking." He gestures toward the smiling wizard, who reveals a nice medallion on a chain around his neck.

PCs who refuse to hand over the crown will find themselves in a serious situation. Throxis is a powerful wizard and Seldar is an experienced fighter. Even if the two have been in a fight with *Pride*'s crew, they aren't too spent to fight the PCs. Moreover, the *Arrow*'s crew is extremely loyal and will fight to the death. The DM should give the PCs hints that a fight may not be the best course of action. A PC with religion proficiency can recognize Seldar's holy symbol as the sign of Torm, a lawful-good god. The crewmen begin to finger their weapons and come closer, while Throxis concentrates on spell users to ensure that he gets off the first spell. Nicodemus (if still alive) might also chime in with the obvious: "Well, folks, I don't know what choice we have, because we must get home and if we fight and win, we'll have to run this vessel ourselves, assuming one of you can get us from the middle of the sea back to Yhaunn."

The DM should let the PCs fight, if they decide to do so. It is extremely unlikely that the adventurers will be able to defeat the *Arrow*'s leader and crew, but it is possible. If the PCs lose, they are put in irons and thrown into the ship's brig. Spell users are drugged to ensure that they don't recover or use spells. When Seldar reaches Suzail, the PCs are taken to the king of Cormyr for justice. After a full hearing, the king pardons them for refusing to hand over the crown but banishes them from the

kingdom forever. The king also takes 1,500 gp for each death the PCs caused among the *Arrow*'s crew, to compensate the families of the deceased. Obviously the mission to help Aunt Marla will be a dismal failure.

The better course is to try to coax a reward from Seldar, since the PCs have recovered a fabulous treasure for the Cormyrean king. If the PCs fought well against Rufus and Malificat, Seldar offers what treasure was found on the *Pride of Procampur* (various gems, jewelry, and coins with a total value of 12,000 gp). He also offers to give the PCs the pirate ship, which the PCs can sell for scrap (5,000 gp), or full value (10,000 gp) if they spend 2,500 gp to get it seaworthy again. The *Pride* must be towed, however, because of the damage it sustained in the battle. Towing will slow the return trip to half speed, and the PCs will not arrive in Yhaunn until after the Earl of Culhane's deadline (unless they made a down payment on Aunt Marla's debt). Lastly, Seldar also refunds the fees that he took at the beginning of the adventure. If the PCs did not engage the *Pride of Procampur*, Seldar refunds the fees and offers the PCs 7,500 gp in gems, which is a fair bounty.

A glance at a map and a calendar will reveal that the PCs cannot afford the time for a long trip to Cormyr, as captives or heroes, because they will miss the deadline to avoid the foreclosure on Aunt Marla's shop. Once they remind Seldar of the situation, he gives in to their request. He is, after all, a paladin; saving a widow's livelihood goes right to his heart.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs originally hired the *Arrow*, they meet the *Pride of Procampur* on the return trip. The pirate ship has been shadowing the *Arrow* throughout the adventure, and Rufus the Cruel will make his move as soon as the *Arrow* heads back. Just as the PCs are about to come to blows with Seldar and his crew over the treasure, Rufus and his crew attack. The battle occurs as described earlier, with Throxis casting a *ship invisibility* spell from his ring before the *Arrow* closes to ramming range.

Even if the PCs successfully defeat Immurk and the pirates, there may not be enough treasure to meet Aunt Marla's 50,000-gp debt once Seldar takes the crown. All of the nonmagical treasure other than the crown totals 22,500 gp. The PCs can receive an additional 8,000 gp from the reimbursement of the ship-hiring fee and the award of the finder's fee. Even with the treasure of the *Pride of Procampur* (12,000 gp) and sale of the wrecked ship (5,000 gp; there is no time to repair the ship), the PCs will still be short of the amount needed. The only way to make up the shortfall is for the PCs to throw in some of their own funds or go back to the grouchy wizard, Strasus, to sell some magical items. ("What? Are you back again? Didn't I warn you?")

Once he sees that the PCs have something of real interest, however, Strasus enters into a great haggling session. He really wants the *cloak of the manta ray* and, after tedious negotiation, finally agrees to pay its full value (12,500 gp). The only other item he has any interest in is the *ring of water elemental metamorphosis*, but he offers only 7,000 gp for it. The *powder of coagulation* is of little interest to him, but he will offer 1,000 gp for it. If the PCs role-play well with Strasus, he throws in free training (including the teaching of two new spells) to any wizard who has risen in level.

Even after selling several magical items, the PCs may come up short, especially since Nicodemus (if still alive) will want his cut. Aunt Marla may well have to throw in her savings, and the PCs may have to put in some of theirs.

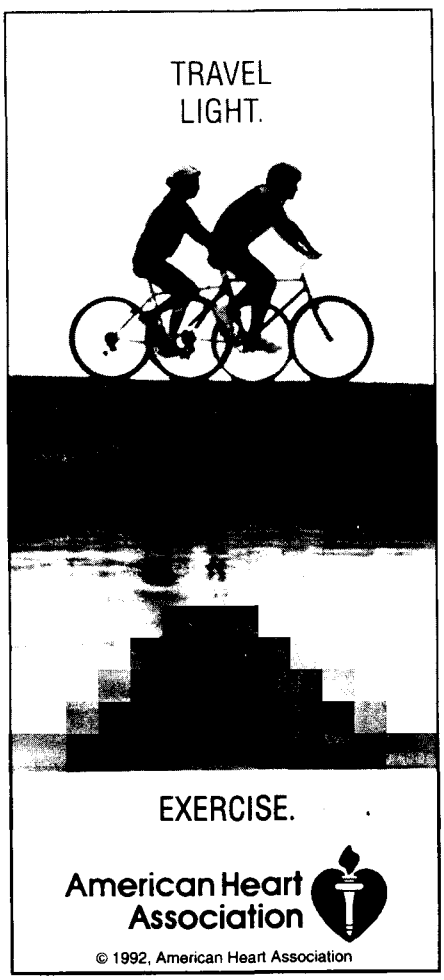
Such an epic adventure entitles the PCs to a 9,000-XP story award plus a 2,000-XP bonus if they meet the deadline. PCs who contribute from their own funds should get 1 XP per gp donated (maximum 1,000 XP per PC). Any PC who convinced the Earl of Culhane to extend the deadline should get 500 XP.

If the adventurers don't meet the foreclosure deadline, the PCs should not get the 2,000-XP bonus, but all will not be lost for Aunt Marla. The Earl of Culhane will allow her to redeem her shop within the next month by paying the debt in full. He has no intention of running the shop himself, and will sell it at the end of 30 days to recoup some of his gambling losses. If Aunt Marla regains possession of her shop, she amends the deed to remove her wastrel son's name.

Award additional individual experience points generously for role-playing and overcoming obstacles (speaking with the Oracle successfully, getting past the Portuguese men-o-war, negotiating with Seldar, etc.).

The PCs' further adventures depend on how they end this adventure. If they defeated Seldar and his crew, they become criminals wanted by the Cormyrean authorities. Privateers and bounty hunters begin showing up a few months after this adventure. After a few close calls, the PCs should figure out it is time to leave the area.

If, however, the adventure has a happy ending, the limits for future adventuring are boundless. *Pirates of the Fallen Stars* gives numerous ideas for adventures. Aunt Marla might get a ransom note from some pirates who stumbled on Spunk and figure that he is worth at least 10,000 gp. The PCs can decide if they want to take the time to go rescue him so that he can get the thrashing he deserves. Ω



Continued from page 15

blundered into the lavender mold and was infected by it. (She now is an unearthly sight, a glowing lavender snake with a woman's head.) Thanks to the magical effects of the lavender mold, she is capable of regenerating 1 hp per hour, and can regenerate a missing limb (or tail) in 2-8 days.

If the PCs try to negotiate with the spirit naga, they will have to come up with a good reason why they—as members of the gnoll tribe—would dare to attempt to enter the lair of their goddess. If they reveal their true identities, the naga simply laughs at them and says that it makes no difference to her who they are, as long as they agree to serve her. She then attempts to *charm* one or more of the PCs with her gaze.

The spirit naga is interested only in maintaining a steady supply of rotten meat to feed on (the more putrid the better) and in amassing treasure. She might be persuaded to part with the magical sword, since her one attempt to draw it from its sheath caused her damage. (She has only just recovered from this injury; PCs can see a fresh scar near the tip of her prehensile tail.) But she will demand a more valuable magical item in exchange.

The spirit naga refuses to let the PCs remove any other magical item from her lair without first explaining how they will use it to aid her. In the meantime, she uses her *ESP* spell to read the PCs' minds. If she learns that the PCs intend to break their promises or do her harm, she attacks them without warning.

Naga, spirit: INT high; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 10; hp 39; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA gaze, poison bite, spells; SZ H (15′ long); ML 14; XP 5,000; MM/266.

The spirit naga speaks the Common tongue, as well as gnoll, hobgoblin, and goblin dialects. Her bite injects Type F poison. She can cast the wizard spells *color spray, detect magic, grease, ventriloquism*; *detect good, ESP, hold person;* and the priest spells *cure light wounds, protection from good, remove fear*; *heat metal, obscurement.*

The spirit naga's treasure includes a potion of *gaseous form;* a potion of *healing;* a magical scroll of *hold undead* and *phantom steed* spells, a scroll of *identify, deeppockets,* and *enervation* spells, and scrolls of protection from *electricity* and *elementals,* each rolled inside a golden tube (worth 200 gp each); 2,000 sp; 500 gp; and six gems (values 500 gp, 100 gp (×3), 50 gp, and 10 gp), and Jacinth's magical sword.

When the PCs recover the *sword +1, luck blade,* two of its three rubies are still red. If the PCs realize that the sword is capable of granting two wishes, they may want to use it to regain their original forms. However, this lawful-good intelligent sword has other uses in mind for its magical powers. It was created with a special purpose—to slay evil wizards. It speaks to anyone of good alignment who picks it up, explaining that, unlike its nonsentient companion (the ring) it can grant a wish only to someone who swears to help it accomplish its purpose—starting with the spirit naga.

Anyone drawing the sword who is not of good alignment suffers 10 hp damage; this number corresponds to the ego of the weapon. The gnolls were able to pick up the sword by its sheath. Kurgahr never attempted to draw the weapon; he immediately presented it to his goddess when he returned from the raid.

The magical sword has an Intelligence of 14 and speaks the Common tongue and the language of gold dragons. Its primary abilities are detecting evil and detecting magic in a 10′ radius. When used in pursuit of its special purpose, the weapon inflicts fear for 1-4 rounds in any evil wizard it hits.

Concluding the Adventure

Having acquired the magical sword from the lair of the spirit naga, the PCs have two avenues of escape. They can either exit the way they came (through the gnoll lair), follow the passage leading outside from area 7, or go deeper into the Underdark. Whichever exit they choose, the DM can add further encounters if desired. Perhaps Kurgahr and his tribe have returned from their raid while the PCs were exploring the caverns, and demand to know why they went into the holy caves. Or perhaps a war party of hobgoblins waits at the exit of the lower passage.

If the PCs can't persuade the sword to restore them to their original forms, they may be attacked on the spot by an angry mob when they return to Fortunado as gnolls. They may have to sneak in under cover of darkness. If they are lucky, Jacinth has been monitoring their progress with her magical crystal and arranges for someone to meet them on the outskirts of town.

The DM can further expand the adventure if the PCs agree to help Jacinth complete her delivery. (If there are any dwarves in the party, Jacinth might invite them to join the courier service.) For an added twist, the client might turn out to be an evil wizard, bent on destroying the sword. Had Jacinth completed the delivery on her own, she would have been able to turn the sword over to the wizard without any problems. But with the sword in the hands of a PC of good alignment, a battle ensues.

If the PCs brought along some of the lavender mold from area 5 without exposing it to sunlight, they can restore Jacinth's leg. If they didn't take any mold, or the mold was destroyed by sunlight, they may be able to convince Jacinth to make the return journey to the gnoll lair. In either case, they will have to be very persuasive in order to convince Jacinth to allow herself to be infected with the lavender mold before she has exhausted all other possibilities for restoring her leg.

The underground stream in area 7 might turn out to be heavily laden with gold. If the PCs explore just a short distance up the narrower passageway, they discover a mother lode of gold nuggets. Of course, they will have to clear out the gnolls and hobgoblins before they can stake a claim.

Finally, the PCs may decide that they enjoy playing gnolls. Perhaps they want to try to wrest control of the tribe from Kurgahr and lead the gnolls on raids against the hobgoblins. With the more intelligent PCs in charge of the tribe, there just might be a chance that the gnoll nation will rise again.

PCs who wish to remain gnolls should run their characters according to the rules in *The Complete Book of Humanoids.* These PCs do not lose the abilities they already have (aside from those lost or altered when their ability scores changed), but are restricted to the gnoll level maximums: level 11 for fighters, 9 for clerics, 5 for witch doctors (wizards), and 11 for thieves. Unlike "true" gnolls, however, PCs turned into gnoll witch doctors can, at 5th level, cast spells as a 5th-level wizard (spells of up to 3rd level).

Clerics who wish to learn new spells should begin worshiping a gnoll god, preferably one that is compatible with the god they worshiped in their previous form. Wizards must be played as witch doctors. Any new wizard spells learned must be limited to a single school of magic, but gnoll witch doctor PCs can start to learn clerical spells as a shaman (from up to three different spheres). Ω

THEM APPLES

BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS

It takes just one to spoil them all.

Artwork by Kevin Ward

Chris writes: "This is my sixth appearance in DUNGEON® Adventures and my first attempt at a D&D® adventure. In a way, writing "Them Apples" was like walking down the less-traveled road. I felt like an adventurer exploring new ground. I'm just thankful I didn't encounter any hill giants along the way."

"Them Apples" is a D&D adventure designed for 4-8 player characters of levels 1-3 (about 12 total levels). Most of the PCs should be Lawful in alignment, though a variety of classes and races is recommended. To run this adventure, the DM needs only the D&D *Rules Cyclopedia* (RC).

Although the possibility for combat exists, the party's success will rely more on ingenuity than swordsmanship. The antagonists in this module can easily devastate a low-level party. For this reason, suggestions for awarding non-combat experience points are given at the conclusion of the adventure.

This adventure is designed for a generic D&D setting, but it can be easily inserted into the Known World or any other wilderness campaign with few adjustments. (The DM running a Known World campaign might consider using the Five Shires town of Wereskalot as the starting point for the adventure.) With a few statistical conversions, this adventure can even be used by DMs running low-level AD&D® campaigns.

Adventure Background

The village of Wistil is known for only two things: amiable halflings and tasty red apples. The 10 or so halfling families who occupy Wistil tend their orchards with proud diligence, nurturing the finest soil in the country to grow the best apples they can. Visitors who frequent Wistil never leave without purchasing basketfuls of the delicious fruit, often by the cartload.

Although the halflings of Wistil work very hard to maintain their reputation as the finest apple growers in the kingdom, this does create some problems for the idyllic halfling community. Various other apple growers in the region (including neighboring halfling shires) have become envious of Wistil's reputation. Despite efforts to mimic Wistil's methods for planting and nurturing, these competing orchard owners often find themselves producing fruit that pales by comparison. Their apples lack the plumpness, taste,

and overall luster of Wistil apples. Some of the more determined rivals have actually stolen earth from Wistil, believing it possesses some magical secret, only to discover that the earth alone does not guarantee a fine crop.

The halflings of Wistil are quite willing to reveal their "secrets" to growing splendid apples: techniques that include planting posies at the base of each tree in the spring, singing to the apples as they begin to ripen, and allowing joyful children to climb and frolic among the boughs. For most other orchard owners, however, such techniques have proven both arduous and (if you'll pardon the pun) fruitless.

One rival in particular has become so incensed with the halflings over the last several years that he is willing to destroy Wistil's entire crop just to ruin the halfling village's fine reputation. This rival is a disgruntled human orchard-keeper named Yulin Nell. Yulin's small orchard, located several miles from Wistil (near a human town called Keswig), has steadily been losing business because its apples are smaller, duller, and less tasty than the ones found in Wistil. Customers would rather pay 1 gp for a basket of Wistil's apples than 1 sp for two baskets of Yulin's apples.

Yulin realized long ago that he was neither brave enough nor ingenious enough to engineer a plot against the halflings of Wistil by himself. His devotion to apple-growing didn't win him many clever friends, either. All he could do was spend his evenings complaining over a mug of ale at his favorite tavern in Keswig.

A Friend In Need

Two months ago (while drowning his sorrows in a tankard of ale), Yulin encountered a young elf who fancied himself an adventurer. After Yulin explained his problem, the elf promised to help the discouraged orchard-keeper get back at the halflings who ruined his business. A fortuitous happenstance? Yulin seemed to think so.

Yulin does not know that his elven ally is actually a *polymorphed* wooddrake: a green-scaled, man-sized dragon capable of assuming demihuman form (elf or halfling only). The wooddrake is extremely Chaotic, causing trouble wherever it goes. It sees Yulin's thirst for vengeance as a way to get the poor orchard-keeper in trouble, and an excuse to wreak havoc among the halflings of Wistil.

The wooddrake, in its elf disguise, promised Yulin its services for a hefty fee of 20 gp. Yulin, though far from wealthy, reluctantly parted with the money (which would otherwise have been used to drink himself into oblivion).

Combining Yulin's coins with its own assortment of pickpocketed funds, the wooddrake visited Keswig's local thieves' guild and bought a decorative flask of poison. The wooddrake then set out for Wistil, altering its appearance to resemble a cheerful halfling. The *polymorphed* wooddrake had no trouble securing a job tending the apple trees. After several days of careful village surveillance, the drake crept out into the orchard one night and doused the roots of six apple trees with the poison. It then discarded the empty flask before returning to its room in the house of a local family.

Wistil's Blight

The halflings of Wistil became suspicious of sabotage one month ago, when six of their apple trees began displaying symptoms of a mysterious ailment. The nature of the ailment is still unknown to the halflings, although they suspect poison. This theory was all but confirmed when the village sheriff discovered an unusual-looking flask lying in the bushes near the poisoned orchard only days after the initial poison symptoms were detected. The flask was carefully crafted into the likeness of a green dragon (ironically, much like the wooddrake in appearance), but its former contents could not be identified.

Even in the vastness of the orchard, the poisoned trees are readily visible. The apples (not yet ripened or edible) have fallen off, the leaves have turned dull black, and the bark has faded to a pale ivory hue. The halflings have applied all their nurturing skills to no avail. The poisoning, though limited to only six trees, has the entire village up in arms. The very sight of such wretched trees could damage Wistil's fine reputation or, by sheer presence, make the other trees in the orchard "unhappy" (or so the halfling farmers profess). Some concerned villagers suspect that the poisoned trees are actually an omen forecasting an end to their way of life.

Believing their trees (and reputation) to be in jeopardy and lacking the skills to nurse the afflicted trees back to health, the villagers organized a party of six halflings to consult with the druids of Gelwen Grove, a small and reclusive coven situated in the depths of Thistlewood (a forest some 25 miles east of Wistil). The leader of the halfling band, Roland, was given two money purses (each containing 75 gp) in the event the druids requested payment for their assistance. The halflings, of course, were unaware that treasure holds little importance among druids.

The Druids and the Giant

The halflings arrived in Gelwen Grove without incident. The druids listened patiently to the halflings' plight and were quick to identify the nature of the malady. They gave the friendly halflings six small wooden flasks of antidote to treat the ailing trees (one potion per tree). When the druids declined to accept the halflings' money, Roland and his friends happily departed for home.

On the way back to Wistil, the halflings had the misfortune of meeting a hill giant on a hunting foray. Awed by the giant's immensity, the halflings quickly fled, but the giant easily outran them. The giant, Brufnu by name, hurled a heavy net over the fleeing wee folk, snaring five of them, including Erol, who was carrying the potions. Only Roland managed to avoid capture. He tried to hold the giant at bay with his sling, but Brufnu was undaunted. The giant hoisted up his netful of halflings, slung the catch over his shoulder, and sauntered back to his house in the hills.

Roland pursued the hill giant, peppering Brufnu with sling stones. The giant, irked by Roland's tenacity, grabbed the bold halfling and hurled him 60' through the air. (Five halflings make a fine meal; six is a stomach cramp waiting to happen.) Roland was seriously injured and could not pursue the giant any farther. He limped back to Wistil, struggling with the loss of not only his friends but also the druids' potions.

Roland's Return

With bleary eyes, Roland described his encounter with the giant to the assembled halflings. When one of the villagers asked Roland why he didn't bribe the giant with the 150 gp he carried, Roland burst into tears; the idea simply hadn't occurred to him.

The Chaotic wooddrake revelled in

this unexpected turn of events and immediately suggested that a new party be sent to retrieve the stolen potions and missing halflings, knowing full well the carnage that would result. The other villagers viewed the situation with no less urgency, unaware of the wooddrake's wish to foster more chaos. They did not, however, wish to endanger any more halfling lives. When it was proposed that the village hire a band of professionals to locate and penetrate the giant's lair, the wooddrake saw yet another opportunity to increase chaos and confusion.

The wooddrake, in its halfling disguise, intends to follow the bold adventurers to the giant's lair, where it hopes to stir up more trouble (and prevent anyone from retrieving the druids' potions).

The drake is a practiced thief, adept at making things difficult for those around it. The wooddrake does not like combat and surrenders immediately if cornered and attacked. Like most good pranksters, the wooddrake likes to take credit for its misdemeanors and eventually wants to be captured. What better time to tell everyone that it's actually a freelance thief who was hired by a spiteful and "extremely dangerous" apple grower named Yulin Nell to poison Wistil's apple orchards. Fostering enmity is, after all, the wooddrake's favorite pastime.

Beginning the Adventure

This adventure deals primarily with the party's attempt to penetrate the hill giant's lair. Luckily for the party, Brufnu is not home when the PCs first arrive. (See "The House on the Hill" for details.) The wooddrake is an added complication that the PCs must eventually contend with. However, before the adventure can begin, the PCs must be in the vicinity of Wistil. Maybe the PCs are just passing through, or perhaps the locals have posted notices requesting their services.

If the DM wishes, the PCs could stroll into Wistil just as poor Roland returns with news of the hill giant's ambush. The PCs would then overhear the villagers (and the wooddrake) wrestling with the notion of an organized rescue. The villagers would be most grateful if the PCs volunteered to help them. Statistics for the villagers and the wooddrake are given in area A. (See "Wistil and the Wilderness.")

The villagers do not know where the marauding giant lives (they presume he dwells in the hills), but Roland can describe the place where he and the other halflings were attacked: a gully filled with statues. (See area B.) Brufnu's dwelling is, in fact, located at area G.

Unlike the deceitful wooddrake, the halflings of Wistil are Lawful. If the PCs succeed in rescuing the five missing halflings, the village will gladly pay them the 150 gp previously set aside for the druids. For each druidic potion returned intact, the village will pay another 50 gp (hence if all six flasks are retrieved, the payment is a whopping 300 gp). The troublesome wooddrake will try desperately to keep these potions from reaching the village.

Wistil and the Wilderness

For every six hours the party spends in the wilderness, the DM should roll for a random encounter. There is a 1-in-6 chance of an encounter occurring; consult the "Random Wilderness Encounters" table if a 1 is rolled. Random encounters should be nonlethal; the DM is encouraged to modify encounters that might prove too difficult for weak parties.

A. Village of Wistil.

Nestled among the grassy hills is the village of Wistil, a halfling community well known for its cozy hospitality and its wondrous apple orchards. The village proper is nothing more than a collection of burrows with small doors, hand-woven welcome mats, and brick chimneys. The orchards, with their perfect rows of apple trees, stretch across the hillsides and valleys as far as the eye can see. Several stout folk can be seen in the orchards, carefully tending the earth and trees with various implements.

The village consists of 10 burrows, one per family (the typical halfling family consists of 1d6+4 individuals, plus guests and boarders). Most of the halflings, including the children, spend their days tending the orchards. Only the housewives and village elders remain near the burrows. At night, most of the halflings retire to their homes (except 1d4+1 members of the village militia assigned to guard the orchards against the depredations of wild dogs, raccoons, and other mischievous animals).

The Sheriff of Wistil is a rotund, forthright halfling named Gneegin Furfoot. Gneegin's job is to protect Wistil's families and orchards, in that order. He commands the village guard, currently composed of seven male halflings including Roland, his sergeant. Gneegin deeply regrets not sending a full militia escort with the halflings to Gelwen Grove, but he feared further attempts to poison the orchards and wanted his militia close by.

If the PCs ask to see the poisoned trees for themselves, Sheriff Gneegin is more than happy to lead them into the orchard where the six ailing trees are located. Unfortunately, only a druid possesses the knowledge to fashion an antidote for the poison. (In the D&D system, a druid is a specialized cleric of 9th level or higher.)

Gneegin Furfoot, halfling sheriff: AC 7 (5 against large creatures); H4; hp 18; MV 90'(30'); #AT 1 weapon; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to attack rolls with missiles, +1 initiative bonus; Save H4; ML 10; AL L; SZ S; S 12, I 11, W 12, D 12, C 13, Ch 14; RC/182; leather armor, small wooden shield (usually kept in burrow), short sword, sling (30 stones), dragon-shaped flask (found in the orchard; this container once held the poison).

Roland Wickthicket, halfling sergeant: AC 5 (3 against large-sized creatures); H3; hp 3 (12 at full); SA +2 to attack rolls with missiles; Save H3; ML 10 (8 if Gneegin is slain); S 13, I 9, W 10, D 13, C 11, Ch 12; other stats and equipment same as Gneegin.

Roland sustained damage from the hill giant and greatly appreciates any healing the PCs offer.

Halfling militia (6): AC 6 (4 against large creatures); H2; hp 8 each; Save H2; ML 10 (8 if Gneegin is slain); other stats same as Gneegin; leather armor, small wooden shield, short sword, dagger, sling (20 stones).

Normal halflings (67): HD 1−1; hp 4 (adults), 3 (adolescents), 2 (children); Save H1; ML 8; other stats same as Gneegin; typically unarmed (25% carry daggers or knives).

B. Statues in the Gully.

A shallow stream flows along the bottom of a rocky ravine ahead of you. A few shade trees grow along the top of the gully, and several rocky outcroppings can be seen in the area, but your attention is immediately drawn to the dozen or more statues in the vicinity. Some of the statues are humanoid; others are carved in the likenesses of wild animals.

The statues are not carved; they are people and animals turned to stone by a pair of cockatrices that once laired here. The cockatrices have since departed, leaving behind 13 statues: four humans, two hobgoblins, two halflings, one dwarf, and the rest animals (a deer, two wolves, and a mule). There is no treasure to be found around the statues.

This is where the halflings encountered the giant. PCs searching the area have a 1-in-6 chance of finding 1-2 polished sling stones belonging to the halfling Roland. The giant is nowhere to be found, but PCs with tracking skills may attempt to follow the giant's footprints to area F. A skill check is required each hour to locate and continue to follow the hill giant's trail.

C. Thistlewood.

You have entered a dense forest of mixed deciduous trees. The woods are teeming with all manner of wildlife, from small game to annoying clouds of insects. The trees create a

Random Wilderness Encounters
(Roll 1d8)

1. **Oil beetle**: AC 4; HD 2; hp 8; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1 bite plus special; Dmg 1d6 plus special; SA oil spray; Save F1; ML 8; INT 0; AL N; SZ M; XP 25; RC/160. This black beetle burrows up from the earth and squirts its blistering oil at one of the PCs. (Victim attacks at −2 until a *cure light wounds* spell is cast or 24 hours have passed.)
2. **Gnolls** (1-6): AC 5; HD 2; hp 11 each; MV 90'(30'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1; Save F2; ML 8; INT 7; AL C; SZ L; XP 20; RC/180; spear, 2d10 cp each. These hunters are taking a slain deer back to their lair in the hills. They attack only if they outnumber the PCs; otherwise, they steer clear.
3. **Harpy**: AC 7; HD 3; hp 13; MV 60'(20'), fly 150'(50'); #AT 2 claws/1 weapon plus special; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d6; SA singing *charm*; Save F6; ML 7; INT 7; AL C; SZ M; XP 50; RC/182. The harpy has a nest somewhere in the hills. She attacks with her claws and a wooden club.
4. **Hobgoblins** (2-8): AC 6; HD 1+1; hp 6 each; MV 90'(30'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Save F1; ML 8; INT 10; AL C; SZ M; XP 15; RC/185; long sword, short bow, six arrows, 2-8 sp. There's a 30% chance that these hobgoblins are resting among a cluster of boulders and are not immediately visible. These hunters attack the PCs on sight.
5. **Robber flies** (1-6): AC 6; HD 2; hp 7 each; MV 90'(30'), fly 180' (60'); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1d8; Save F1; ML 8; INT 0; AL N; SZ S; XP 20; RC/202. These devious insects are hiding in the shady boughs of a tree. They descend and attack the party when the PCs come within 10'.
6. **Stirges** (1-4): AC 7; HD 1; hp 4 each; MV 30'(10'), fly 180'(60'); #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; SA blood drain, +2 to attack rolls on initial attack; Save F2; ML 9; INT 1; AL N; SZ S; XP 13; RC/208. These ravenous hunters attack the PCs on sight. These stirges are black and resemble ravens from a distance.
7. **Thoul**: AC 6; HD 3; hp 16; MV 120'(40'); #AT 2 claws or 1 weapon; Dmg 1d3/1d3 or by weapon type; SA touch causes paralysis; SD regenerates 1 hp/round; Save F3; ML 10; INT 6; AL C; SZ M; XP 65; RC/209; long sword. There's a 50% chance that this vile creature is accompanied by 1-6 hobgoblins. (See #4.) The thoul has orders from a distant hobgoblin chief to kidnap some worthy slaves and bring them back to the hobgoblin lair.
8. **Wolves** (2-8): AC 7; HD 2+2; hp 9 each; MV 180'(60'); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1d6; Save F1; ML 8 (6 if half are slain); INT 2; AL N; SZ M; XP 25; RC/212. These marauders will not attack unless they outnumber the PC party.

thick canopy overhead, allowing only thin ribbons of light to slip through. Several paths can be seen wending their way through the forest.

The druids of Gelwen Grove are responsible for safeguarding these woods. They do not object to periodic hunting or carefully tended campfires, but they react strongly to trespassers who deliberately or recklessly endanger the local fauna and flora. Adventurers who hack down trees or set parts of the forest ablaze will be visited by an incensed coven member. (See area D for statistics.) The druid demands the party's immediate departure; if the PCs incite a confrontation, the druid will retaliate, seeking aid from other coven members or nearby forest denizens (such as a treant).

Anyone capable of communicating with the native wildlife can easily obain directions to Gelwen Grove, the home of the druids. It's possible that the PCs may try to acquire more antidote from the druids rather than steal back the flasks taken by the giant.

D. Gelwen Grove.

Through the trees, you spot a strange circular clearing about 20 yards ahead of you. As you draw closer to the site, you notice the clearing is covered with grass of an even height. The tall trees that surround the 90'-wide clearing form a dome-shaped ceiling of leaves overhead. The clearing's perimeter is marked with a series of wooden stakes jutting out of the earth. The 4'-high stakes are wrapped in ivy and tied off with sprigs of mistletoe. Nothing seems to occupy the clearing at this time.

This is where Thistlewood's druidic coven meets. If the PCs enter the clearing, the druids arrive in 1-4 rounds, having been alerted by the nearby wildlife to the presence of trespassers. Each of the six druids in the coven lives in a small hovel or cabin deeper in the woods. These NPCs are far too powerful for the party to defeat. They are very wise and always prepare their defensive spells prior to meeting strangers.

The ring of ivy-wrapped stakes radiates as magical if a *detect magic* spell is cast. Any aligned creature that enters the clearing is surrounded by a faint aura (illuminates a 5' radius). Lawful creatures radiate a blue aura, Neutral creatures a white aura, and Chaotic creatures a green aura. The druids use these auras to determine a trespasser's likely behavior. All common forest denizens (including insects) remain outside the ring unless the druids deem otherwise.

When the coven of druids finally assembles, the leader, Lief, asks the party its reason for coming. If the PCs claim to need more antidote for Wistil's sick trees, Lief flatly declines to provide it for them. The ever-neutral druids have already performed a helpful service to the halfling village and are not bound by ethics or morals to provide continued assistance. If the PCs reveal that the first batch of potions was stolen by a giant, Lief simply shakes his head and gives the PCs rough directions to the giant's lair. The druids know very little about the giant except that he used to hunt in the woods (until the druids drove him out). He got his revenge by building his home out of logs from the druid's woods, so the druids don't mind sending trouble his way.

The Wooddrake

The wooddrake has been in Wistil for several weeks and boards with one of the smaller halfling families. To the other villagers, the wooddrake is known by the name Happy Summers. Happy is a brazen little halfling with blond hair, blond chin whiskers, and a mischievous gleam in his dark, beady eyes. He usually walks around with a green cloak over his shoulders and sometimes wears a wreath of twigs and thistles on his head (not a popular custom in Wistil).

Even when disguised, the wooddrake cannot resist playing pranks on others. These pranks are usually benign, though its penchant for pickpocketing can be irksome. The other halflings consider Happy a lively addition to their community; no one suspects him of poisoning the apple trees.

The wooddrake trails the party all the way from Wistil to Brufnu's house, hoping to foil their plans at some point. At first, the drake tries to remain detached from the PCs, using its keen senses to follow the party's tracks. Once outside the village, it can *polymorph* itself into an elf to better keep up. In this form, the wooddrake appears as a slim male elf named Keth, with blond hair, piercing green eyes, and a wry grin.

If the PCs take notice of the wooddrake prior to finding the giant's lair, the wooddrake confronts the party as either a skilled elf tracker or a curious halfling villager eager to help his captured friends.

When the PCs finally arrive at the hill giant's lair, the wooddrake asks to join them. The creature does everything it can to instigate a confrontation between the house's occupants and the PC party. For instance, the wooddrake might shout some lewd comment just as the PCs attempt to quietly enter the house. If the PCs are especially tolerant, the wooddrake might try something blatant, like "accidentally" tripping a heavily armored adventurer. (The sound of clattering armor would certainly attract someone's attention.) The DM is encouraged to be as insidious and troublesome as possible when playing this chaotic creature.

If attacked, the *polymorphed* wooddrake quickly surrenders. If threatened or interrogated, the wooddrake admits to poisoning the orchard and claims that it was given a poison flask by Yulin Nell with the purpose of ruining Wistil's good reputation for apple growing. The wooddrake tells all sorts of convincing lies to paint Yulin as a ruthless villain, when in truth he's quite harmless.

The wooddrake tries to keep its *polymorphing* ability secret but may change its shape to loosen bonds or reappear as other NPCs. If the party continues to attack it, the wooddrake flees, changing to its natural form and using its wings to get away if necessary. (Wooddrakes cannot remain airborne for long.) The drake reappears in 3d4 turns, pursued by 2d4 hobgoblin hunters whom it has purposely annoyed and led toward the PCs' location. See the Random Wilderness Encounters table for hobgoblin statistics.

Wooddrake: AC 0 (6 in demihuman form); HD 4; hp 22; MV 120'(40'), fly 30'(10'); #AT 2 claws/1 bite; Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d8; SA thief abilities (as 5th-level thief); SD immune to first- to fourth-level spells, *polymorph* at will (elf and halfling forms only); Save M8; ML 8; INT 10; AL C; SZ M; XP 225; RC/173.

The wooddrake carries no weapons and cannot fly in demihuman form. A *protection from evil* spell will keep the wooddrake at bay.

If the PCs are foolish enough to attack the coven, the druids reply with clubs and spells. The druids can also call on a resident treant to lend assistance.

Lief: AC 6; D12; hp 45; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; Save D12; ML 11; AL N; S 9, I 13, W 18, D 15, C 13, Ch 14; leather armor, club.

Spells: *cure light wounds, detect danger, locate, predict weather; heat metal, hold person, obscure, warp wood; growth of animal, hold animal, protection from poison, striking; control temperature 10' radius, plant door, summon animals; insect plague, truesight; cureall.*

Druids (5): AC 7; D11 (Rosethorn), D10 (Erthmor and Ivy), D9 (Elwood and Acacia); hp 40, 33, 32, 29, 23; Save D9-11; W 17; XP 2,700, 2,500 (×2), 2,300 (×2); other stats similar to Lief.

Spells: *cure light wounds, detect danger, locate, predict weather*; hold person, resist fire*, snake charm, warp wood; growth of animal, protection from poison, striking; speak with plants, sticks to snakes**, summon animals; insect plague*, pass plant***. Only Rosethorn, Erthmor, and Ivy can cast spells with one asterisk. Rosethorn is the only druid who can cast spells marked with two asterisks.

Treant: AC 2; HD 8; hp 36; MV 60'(20'); #AT 2 branches; Dmg 2d6/2d6; SA animate trees; SD blunt weapons inflict 1 hp only (plus magic and Strength bonuses); Save F8; ML 9 (11 when defending druids); INT 11; AL L; SZ L; RC/209.

E. Hill Giant's Hovel.

Built atop an otherwise desolate hill is a large but primitive dome made of rocks and boulders mortared together. The hemispherical building has one apparent entrance, a 12'-high open portal. Smoke belches forth from a smaller hole in the domed ceiling.

This remote site is where Brufnu the hill giant spends most of this adventure. This hovel is not his home, however. A female hill giant named Meveg dwells here. Her mate, Joll, was slain by adventurers years ago, so Meveg lives alone. Brufnu desperately wants to win Meveg's affections. His reasons for courting the ugly widow-giantess are given in "The House on the Hill" section.

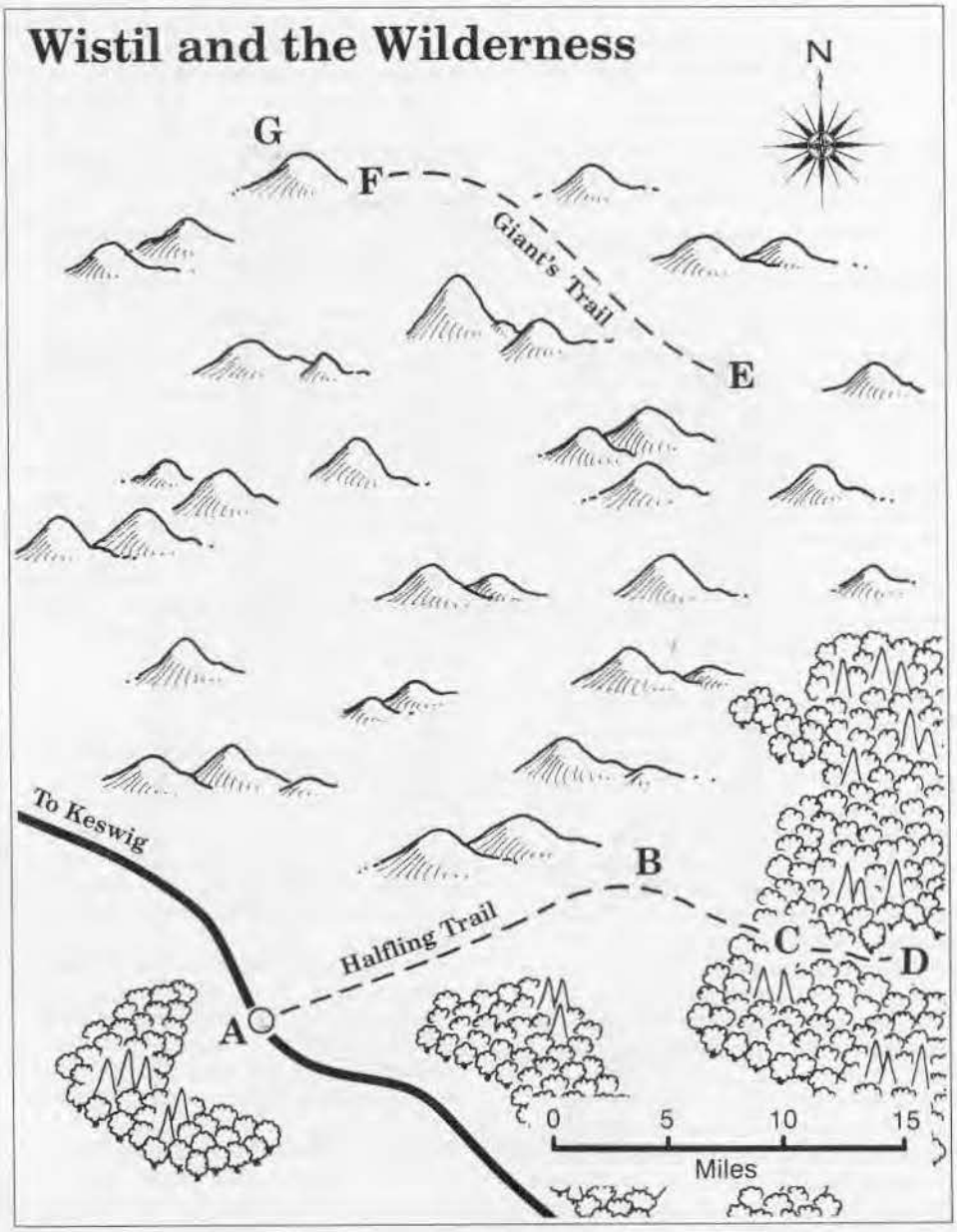
Meveg is roasting an orc for Brufnu. Although she follows a vegetarian diet, Meveg is trying to be a good hostess for her admirer. She gets really irked when human and demihuman vermin enter her lair, and she beats them with her huge wooden spoon until they leave. Any intruders who dare remain are clubbed senseless and then discarded outside like garbage. If Brufnu is present, he will assist.

Meveg's hovel is 40' in diameter and 25' high. A large pile of dusty furs serves as the giantess's bed. Under the furs is a 5' × 3' × 2' wooden trunk containing 2,052 cp, 1,322 sp, 258 gp, three gems (50 gp each), and two potions (*elasticity* and *fortitude*) in cherub-shaped ceramic jars. Other furnishings in the hovel include an 8'-diameter fire pit with an iron spit; primitive cooking implements; and a basket of wild lettuce, beets and carrots.

If the PCs are foolish enough to try to search the hovel, use Brufnu's and Meveg's statistics as provided on page 43.

F. Nearing the House.

Atop a distant hill, you see a large building with smoke issuing from its tall chimneys. A footpath edged with



pretty white stones starts here and meanders up the hillside to the mammoth building ahead of you.

The pretty white stones that decorate the path to Brufnu's house were placed there by Reynid and Veiga, Brufnu's twin daughters.

G. Brufnu's House.

This immense house is obviously proportioned for a giant, although it's certainly large enough to house more than one. The building has no apparent windows and is made of horizontal wooden logs expertly plastered together. The path of white stones ends in front of a 14′-high iron-bound wooden door set into one corner of the house. The door handle is 7′ off the ground. Except for the house and a few patches of wild grass, the hilltop is bare.

One hour after the party arrives at the giant's house, Brufnu leaves area E and makes his way home. For reasons described in "The House on the Hill," Brufnu is joined by the giantess Meveg. Ordinarily, it would take Brufnu no more than two hours to make the return trip home. However, he's just gorged himself on roasted orc and has been conscripted to lug Meveg's hefty treasure trunk. As a result, the return time is lengthened by one hour. Hence, the PCs have only four hours to rescue the halflings and obtain the druids' potions before the two adult giants arrive.

Brufnu, a naturally gifted carpenter, built this large house for himself and his family years ago. He's very proud of his achievement and considers himself far smarter than the average hill giant (as indeed he is). The front door is not locked. Like all doors in the house, however, it requires an Open Doors roll to open (PCs with exceptional Strength get a bonus to this roll). Normally, a door can be opened on a roll of 5 or 6 (on 1d6). All doors are made of 1′-thick, 14′-high solid oak.

PCs can also enter Brufnu's house by climbing down the chimneys into areas 3, 4, 6, or 7. Those of human size or smaller can be lowered down the chimneys without getting stuck. However, all the chimneys except the one leading to Brufnu's bedroom (area 4) have fires burning at the bottom. A thief can climb up and down the chimneys without the aid of ropes, grapples, or other apparatus if he makes a successful Climb Walls check.

The walls of Brufnu's house are made of solid 2′-thick wood logs. Scaling the outside walls of the house requires thieving skills or climbing equipment. The height of the house (not including the gently sloped, slate-tiled roof) is 20′. Moving across the weatherworn roof tiles requires a Dexterity check at +2. Anyone falling off the roof and hitting the ground (the result of a failed Dexterity check) suffers 2d6 hp damage.

Innovative PCs can enter the house by digging a tunnel under the log walls. The ground upon which the house sits is rocky and hard. Digging a narrow, one-person tunnel to the building's interior requires a minimum of nine hours of work for one person. Only three PCs can work on the tunnel at one time. (Hence, three people can excavate a narrow tunnel in three hours.)

The House on the Hill

Most hill giants are brutish, stupid, uncivilized barbarians. Brufnu, however, is an exception. Although he's huge and ugly, he's not as crude, unrefined, or ill-tempered as one might expect. He understands the meaning of words like courtesy, diplomacy, and restraint.

Brufnu wasn't born this way; Uthag, his mate of 13 years, worked very hard to domesticate him, transforming Brufnu into a veritable "model of decency." Brufnu worshiped Uthag and built his hilltop house to her exact specifications. Unfortunately, as it often happens, Uthag left Brufnu two years ago for another hill giant. (Barbarism does have its appeal, after all.) Left behind were the house, the laundry, and two daughters named Reynid and Veiga.

For his daughters' sake, Brufnu tried very hard to retain his domestic lifestyle. He endeavored to stay clean, for one thing. While the other hill giants engaged in bloody raids, Brufnu limited himself to big-game hunting. Yes, he raided the occasional merchant caravan, but only when he needed more ale or other supplies. Nevertheless, getting by without Uthag has proven quite difficult, and Brufnu is slowly becoming more inclined to let old habits resurface.

Only Brufnu's ogre-sized daughters (15-year-old twins) prevent their father from reverting to his savage ways. They are spitting images of their mother, similar to Uthag in many ways except one. Neither Reynid nor Veiga can cook. Although they have tried desperately to please their father using Uthag's old recipes, their meals always taste like dirt. After several bouts of indigestion, Brufnu decided it was time to pursue another mate. Meveg, a recently widowed giantess, seemed an ideal choice.

Had Brufnu not been "domesticated," he would have taken his heavy club, clobbered Meveg on the head, and dragged the unconscious giantess back to the house to become his mate. However, Brufnu was too civilized for such behavior. Over the last several months, he's been trying to woo Meveg into becoming his wife (and he's been getting a few decent meals in the process).

Having been married once herself, Meveg understood what marriage meant to most female giants: virtual slavery. Naturally, she had many reservations. Despite her aloofness, however, she became enamored with Brufnu's gentle manner. (Her previous mate was intolerably primitive.) Swayed by Brufnu's ardent courtship, Meveg decided she would consider his proposal.

In truth, Brufnu doesn't love Meveg at all. In fact, he finds Meveg rather slow-witted and dull, not to mention repulsive. She is, however, an excellent cook. Although she is not desperate for a mate, Meveg has agreed to accompany Brufnu to his house for an extended visit. She is looking forward to getting to know Brufnu and his family better, but all Brufnu is looking forward to is Meveg's cooking, particularly Halfling á la Meveg, one of Brufnu's favorite dishes.

The Halflings

Brufnu was out hunting when he stumbled on the halflings of Wistil. Despite his initial inclination to leave the halflings alone, the malnourished Brufnu finally decided to seize them. (Uthag's lessons in civility and compassion were no match for Brufnu's grumbling stomach.) The five captured halflings have been confined to the kitchen (area 7) pending Brufnu's return with Meveg.

The Druids' Flasks

The six wooden flasks containing the druids' antidote have been placed on a shelf in Brufnu's bedroom (area 4). The halflings were gracious enough to

divulge the contents of the flasks, giving Brufnu no excuse to taste them. PCs who try to retrieve the flasks will undoubtedly have to deal with Kitty, Reynid and Veiga's pet pussy cat (actually a large mountain lion). Kitty usually sleeps in Brufnu's bedchamber.

The House Interior

Brufnu's house has no windows, rendering its chambers pitch black without illumination. Fortunately, several torch holders have been carved into the walls, 12′ above the floor. Some of the torches are lit. (See text and map.) The entire house is filled with the odor of torch smoke, and rooms containing lit torches tend to be rather hazy (although not hazy enough to impair vision).

Everything in Brufnu's house is tailored to the giant's size. Brufnu stands 12′ tall, twice the height of an average human male. Hence, most of the house's furnishings (with some notable exceptions, like the bearskin rugs) are at least twice the "normal" size (double the height, width, etc.). Some items found inside the house (ale barrels and treasure chests, for example) were stolen from human or demi-human merchant caravans and are sized appropriately.

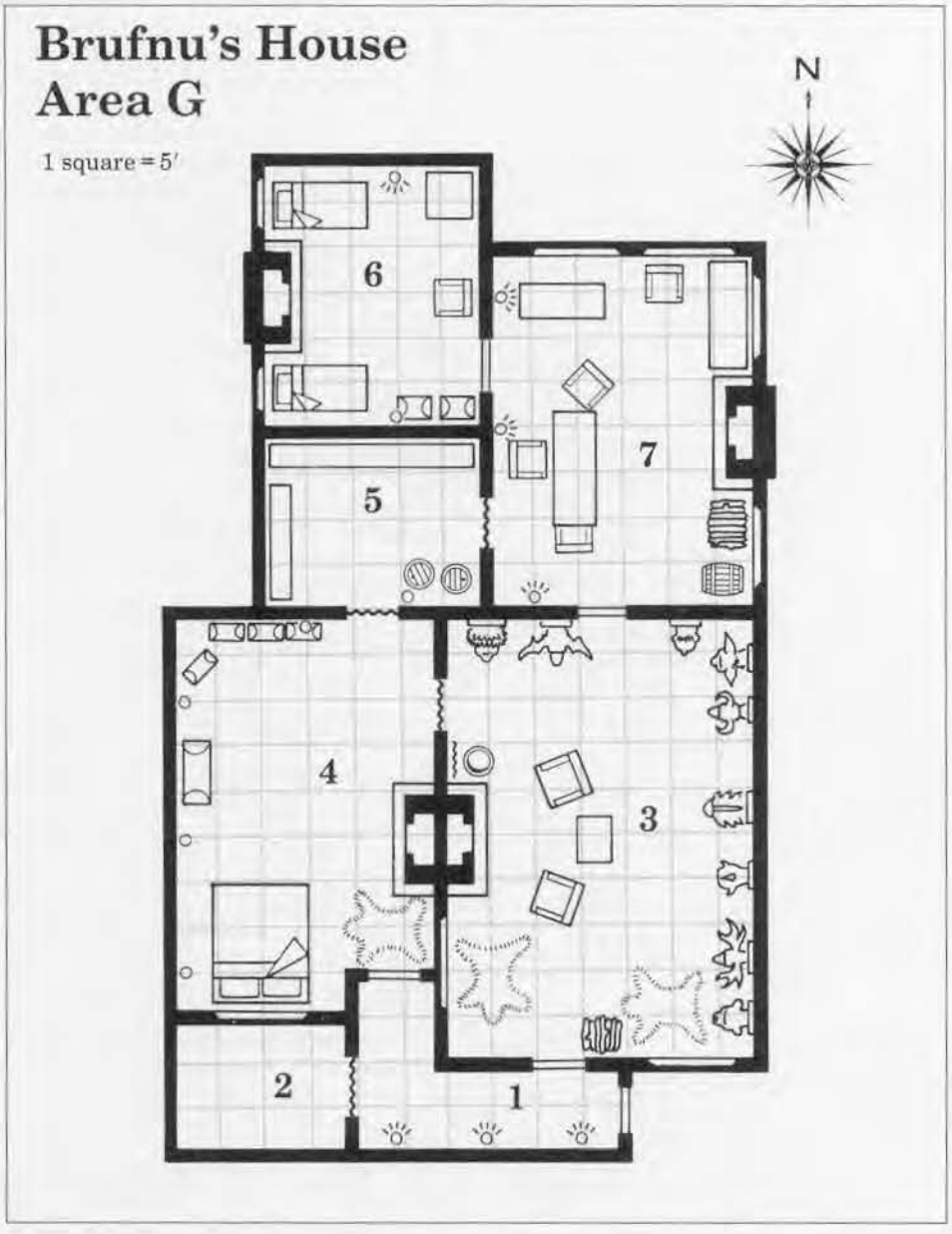
Most of the rooms have shelves neatly carved into the walls. These shelves, like the torch holders, are 12′ above the floor. The ceiling rafters are 20′ above the floor. The floor itself is dirt covered with uneven slate tiles (that can easily be pried out or lifted away).

The Color Map

Included with this adventure is a full-color map of Brufnu's house. The map is meant to be used in conjunction with D&D miniatures or paper cut-outs. With the map laid out flat, cover each room of the house with a piece of paper cut to the proper size. As the PCs peer into or enter each room, remove the appropriate piece of paper. Naturally, anyone without a light source or infravision should not be allowed to see a room's interior unless the chamber is lit.

Inside Brufnu's House

To free the halflings and retrieve the druidic potions, the PCs must overcome or outsmart Reynid and Veiga. Although the young giantesses are adolescents, they are not afraid of strangers and are brutal toward intruders.



If the PCs are joined by the wooddrake, their intrusion will probably be detected. The wooddrake is not afraid to enter the house. Once it does something to attract the giants' attention ("Hmm, what does *this* do?"—CRASH!—"Ooops."), the wooddrake will either hide, flee, or revert to its true form and seek refuge in the rafters. If the PCs refuse to allow the troublesome creature inside Brufnu's house, the wooddrake has other clever methods of wreaking havoc. It might wait until all the PCs have entered the building before reverting to its true form, flying up to the roof, and shouting some playfully dangerous remark down each of the chimneys. ("Hey, you stupid giants! There's intruders in yer house!")

1. Entrance Hall.

Beyond the giant-sized door lies a smoky L-shaped hall. The floor is tiled with flat chunks of slate, the wooden walls are bare, and the area is illuminated by three large torches placed along the southern wall, 12′ off the floor. An opening in the western wall is blocked by a heavy curtain of sewn animal hides.

Beyond the western curtain is Brufnu's cloakroom (area 2). Heavy wood doors lead to the giant's trophy room (area 3) and bedroom (area 4). See area G for details on interior doors.

The torches that illuminate this hall will continue to burn for two hours before they must be replaced. (Extra torches are stored in area 5.)

2. Cloakroom. PCs without infravision will require a light source to see the contents of this chamber.

> The curtain conceals an unlit chamber filled with a variety of odors, most of them attributable to torch smoke or unwashed clothing. Three large iron hooks are nailed to the north wall 12′ off the floor. Hanging from one of these hooks is a large huntsman's cloak made of goat hide. Fastened to the south wall at a height of only 9′ are three more hooks, with a smaller cloak made of wolf fur hanging from the nearest one. At the far end of the room are two pairs of deerskin boots designed for larger-than-man-sized individuals.

The huntsman's cloak (belonging to Brufnu) reeks of blood and sweat. The smaller wolf-fur cloak is used by Reynid and Veiga. The boots belong to the ogre-sized sisters as well. An unlit torch juts out of the east wall near the entrance. There is nothing else of value or interest here.

3. Trophy Room.

> A large fire crackles in the hearth of this huge chamber. Other than the fire, there are no lights, although two unlit torches jut out of the east wall. Your attention is immediately drawn to the various animal heads mounted on wooden plaques on the walls, 12′-15′ above the floor. Two large bearskins lie on the floor under a pair of cluttered, 1′-deep shelves carved into the thick log walls. Carefully cut logs have been stacked next to the southern door, and two cracked stone chairs of huge size and an equally giant table occupy the middle of the chamber. A large ale stein of beaten copper sits atop the table. Between the fireplace and a curtain-covered doorway, a barrel of large spears stands in front of a heavy rope net that hangs on the wall.

Any audible noise in this chamber (including normal speaking voices and clanking armor) has a 40% chance of attracting Kitty's attention. (See area 4.) If the wooddrake is present, it makes enough noise on its own to alert the giants' pet. (The wooddrake then hides or retreats.) The mountain lion enters through the curtain in the west wall and attacks any intruders she sees. The lion's roar, not to mention the sound of battle, is 75% likely to attract Reynid's attention (area 7). Reynid alerts her sister in area 6 before investigating the disturbance.

The mounted animal heads are some of Brufnu's trophies. Starting with the north wall and moving clockwise, the animals are: mountain lion, moose, ogre, bugbear, mountain goat, giant lizard, thoul, stag and grizzly bear. There is nothing unusual about the heads.

The bearskins are in poor condition and cannot be sold. The items on the shelves are more of Brufnu's trophies. Various skulls (belonging to humanoids and demihumans) sit beside animal teeth and antlers. Several items were taken from terrified merchants: a small ebony centaur statuette (worth 2 gp); a silver-studded leather gauntlet (worth 10 gp); a dagger with a 75-gp gem set in its pommel; an electrum-plated tinderbox (worth 25 gp); a 1′ × 1′ × 1′ wooden box with a protruding crank and a spring-loaded puppet stuffed inside (worth 35 gp to an interested buyer); and a 3″-diameter glass orb that changes color at the holder's whim and explodes for 2d6 hp damage if shattered (10′ blast radius; save vs. death ray for half damage). The magical orb is worth 100 gp intact.

Brufnu's five-gallon ale mug (worth 2 gp) is empty. The barrel next to the fireplace holds six large spears (usable by giant-sized beings only) and four human-sized spears. One of these is a *spear +1* taken from a slain caravan guard. The net hanging on the wall is the same one Brufnu used to snare the halflings and is weighted with 16 fist-sized rocks. (It weighs 250 lbs.) When used by a giant, this 16′ × 16′ net can be thrown up to 60′ away, ensnaring 1-3 human-sized targets or double the number of smaller-sized creatures. Treat all targets as AC 9, then apply Dexterity modifiers. Victims are entitled to a saving throw vs. death ray at −3 to escape the net.

4. Brufnu's Bedroom. PCs without infravision require a light source to see the contents of this chamber.

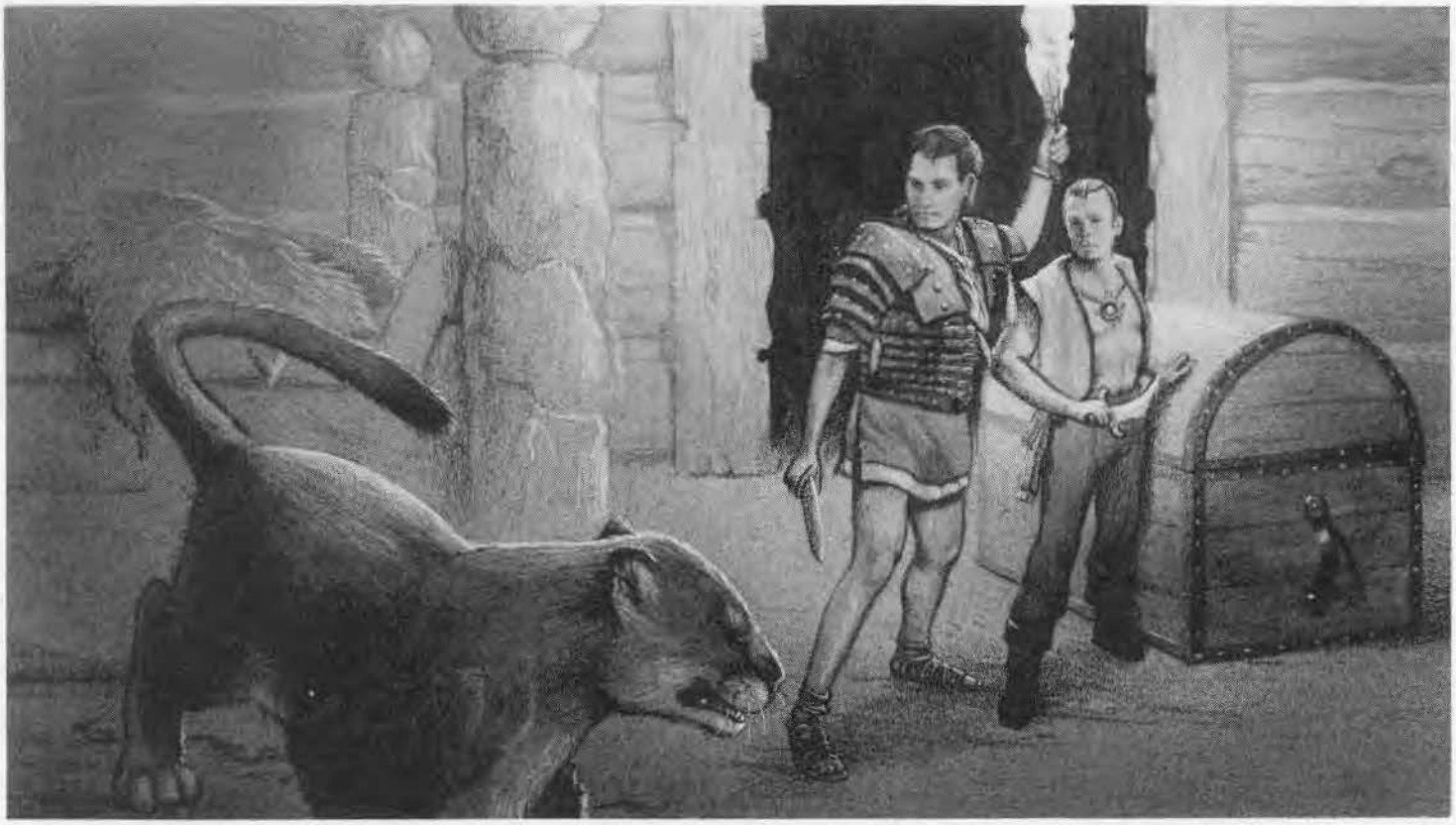
> This huge, unlit bedchamber contains several items of interest. The only piece of furniture is a monstrous bed of chiselled stone nearly 15′ long and at least 10′ wide, heaped with layers of animal skins and furs. Carved into the wall above the bed is a long shelf cluttered with mugs and other containers. Four unlit torches sit in holders on the north and west walls. A bearskin rug lies on the floor between the bed and the fireplace. A pile of animal skins is heaped in disarray on the floor at the foot of the bed. Near this pile there is a large (7′-long, 5′-high) wooden trunk. Against the north wall are four normal-sized trunks of various design. Curtains sewn from animal skins cover the exits in the north and east walls.

If the adventurers haven't roused Kitty, the mountain lion is sleeping atop the heap of skins at the foot of Brufnu's bed. PCs who enter this room without first rendering themselves silent or invisible have an 80% chance of waking the lion. (Kitty's a light sleeper.) If the wooddrake is present, it deliberately does something to awaken the lion: coughing, scuffing its feet, or dropping something. Any loud noises in this area have a 75% chance of alerting Reynid in area 7. After Reynid warns Veiga in area 6, they both come to investigate.

The 7′ × 3½′ × 5′ trunk near Kitty's bed is locked, and Brufnu carries the only key (around his neck). Thieves attempting to pick the lock receive a +10% bonus. (The mechanism is quite simple.) Inside are six wolf furs (worth 10 gp each). Beneath the furs are several of Brufnu's more valuable acquisitions: a medium-sized *shield +1*, a large sack of 566 gp, another large sack holding 15 chunks of purple quartz (worth 10 gp per chunk), a silver-horned helmet (45 gp), and two solid silver dryad statuettes (worth 70 gp each).

The smaller wooden trunks are unlocked and weigh 40-50 lbs. each. Trunk #1 holds 2,195 cp; trunk #2 contains 1,486 sp; trunk #3 holds 1,113 ep; and trunk #4 contains 45 pieces of fake jewelry (worth 1-4 gp each).

Brufnu's bed is 5′ high and made of several poorly fitted blocks of solid stone. The 12′ high shelf above the bed



holds Brufnu's collection of ale mugs (15 in all, sized for humans; none of them are particularly valuable). Also on the shelf are the six wooden flasks containing the druidic antidote to the poison affecting Wistil's apple trees. Each flask is plugged with a cork, and all are quite durable. The flasks are tied together with a 5′ length of rope. (The rope is tied in a knot around the neck of each flask.) Human-sized characters can barely reach the shelf by standing on the bed. The PCs receive experience points for recovering these potions intact. (See "Concluding the Adventure.")

Kitty, mountain lion: AC 6; HD 3+2; hp 24; MV 150′(50′); #AT 2 claws/1 bite; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6; Save F2; ML 9 (in lair); INT 2; AL N; SZ M; XP 50 or special (see "Concluding the Adventure"); RC/163.

If Kitty fails a morale check, she immediately withdraws to the kitchen (area 7).

5. Storage Room. PCs without infravision will need a light source to see the contents of this room.

> Two curtains made of sewn animal skins cover the exits of this dark storage room. In the corner between the two curtained doorways rests a pair of normal-sized wooden barrels. Jutting out of the wall to the west of the barrels is an unlit torch. The remainder of the wall space is taken up by 15′-high wooden shelves loaded with common supplies and foodstuffs. Needless to say, various aromas—both pleasant and unpleasant—fill this chamber.

If Reynid has not been alerted to intruders, the PCs can hear her cleaning up the kitchen (area 7). She has a 75% chance of hearing any loud noises inside the storeroom. If she suspects intruders, Reynid fetches her sister and they both explore the room.

The following items are stored on the lowest shelves (1′-5′ above the floor): three 10′ × 12′ wool blankets, three normal-sized lanterns (without oil), a 2′-square wooden box containing 175 nails, six large sacks (empty and folded), and three pairs of giant-sized leather boots.

The following items are kept on the middle shelves (6′-10′ above the floor): three sacks of grain; two sacks of flour; 32 clay pots containing herbs, grasses, garlic, and other seasonings (some mildly poisonous); two heavy clay jugs (empty); and three kegs of potent-smelling apple cider.

Finally, here are the items stored on the highest shelves (11′-15′ above the floor): two normal-sized flasks of oil (both half-full), 15 large torches, a giant-sized mallet with an iron head, three human-sized long swords, and a sack of 20 iron spikes.

The two barrels sitting on the floor contain ale. Brufnu acquired them from a generous merchant whom he encountered during a hunting expedition.

6. Daughters' Bedroom. If alerted to intruders, Veiga is hiding behind the chamber door, hoping to surprise any PCs who enter without an invitation.

> Opening the door reveals a spacious firelit chamber containing two 10′-long wooden beds covered with animal skins and furs. The beds flank a large blazing hearth. Thanks to the fireplace

and the single burning torch set into the north wall, this chamber is unpleasantly warm and smoky.

Shelves have been carved into the wall above each bed, and stacked on these shelves are a number of odd items. Other furnishings include a large table, a proportionately sized chair, and twin wooden trunks with the letters "V" and "R" (one initial per chest) etched into their sides and front.

Unless she is summoned by the thunderous voice of her sister, Veiga is sitting on the southernmost bed with her legs outstretched, sewing a tunic out of strips of cowhide and using sheep's wool for thread. If the PCs confront her in this room, she either fights with the torch (1d6+2 hp damage, plus 1d6 hp fire damage each round) or punches them with her fist (1d6+2 hp damage). She would prefer to arm herself with a blunt instrument taken from the kitchen. (A rolling pin would be her first choice, since it inflicts 2d4+2 hp damage.)

Like her sister, Veiga is waiting for the return of her father. She just finished tidying up her room, as well as her father's bedroom and trophy room, in anticipation of Meveg's arrival. When not working around the house, Veiga dreams about long, romantic liaisons with young male hill giants.

The shelves above the girls' beds are stacked with dolls (many of them homemade), small mirrors, bottles of perfume (obtained from merchant caravans by their father), and items of jewelry made from teeth and bone (worthless). A large mistreated teddy bear lies slumped under the furs of Reynid's bed.

Neither of the trunks (4½′ × 3′ × 3½′) is locked. Aside from the usual articles of primitive clothing, the trunks contain a few items of value. Inside Veiga's trunk, the PCs can find a jewelled comb (human-sized, worth 145 gp), an amethyst-studded silver tiara (Veiga uses it as a bracelet, worth 450 gp), and a large sack of 593 sp. Reynid's trunk contains a small hourglass on a fine electrum chain (worth 150 gp), a pouch holding three cut garnets (worth 100 gp each), and a small sack of 180 ep.

Veiga, young hill giantess: AC 5; HD 4+1; hp 24; MV 90′(30′); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +2; Save F4; ML 10; INT 6; AL C; SZ L; XP 125 or special (see "Concluding the Adventure"); RC/198 (Ogre).

Veiga has the same red hair and toothy grin as her sister, but she is more even-tempered and contemplative than Reynid. Nevertheless, she doesn't like humans and demihumans, and will crush them like she would a pesky spider.

7. Kitchen. If Reynid has not been warned of intruders, PCs listening at the door have a 1-in-6 chance of hearing the young giantess as she hurriedly tidies up the kitchen (before her father returns with Meveg). Thieves may use their Hear Noise ability instead.

The air in the kitchen is stale, smoky, and warm. Various unpleasant cooking odors fill your nostrils as you survey the room's contents. The room is lit by three torches and a dwindling fire in the hearth. Occupying the middle of the room is a high table with three large chairs (one slightly bigger than the other two). A fourth chair rests between two 7′-high work tables. One table has been cleaned off, but the other is cluttered with dirty dishes. Each work table has storage space below, closed off with a pair of large wooden doors. A broomstick has been shoved through the iron door handles of the doors below the northwest table.

Neatly carved into the walls are four long shelves lined with jars, dishes, and common kitchen utensils. A 4′-deep barrel sits on its side in the southeast corner.

If she hasn't been alerted, Reynid is standing on the northernmost chair, organizing the jars on the overhead shelf. (Reynid stands 9′ tall, and the shelves are 12′ high.) PCs who have not been detected can take advantage of Reynid's preoccupation. The young giantess is humming a nursery rhyme to herself, although she periodically shouts some disparaging remark about "young male giants" to her sister in area 7. (The sisters have reached a very fickle age.)

If she detects the PCs, Reynid shouts to her sister and seizes the nearest pot or rolling pin (2d4+2 hp damage). She then attempts to club the PCs into submission or drive them from the house. She will not negotiate for the halflings' release. If Reynid fails her morale check, she retreats to area 6 and barricades the door.

The five captured halflings are trapped inside the barred storage area beneath the western work table. If they hear intruders, the halflings pound on the doors, alerting the PCs to their whereabouts. The halflings are very grateful to any PC who releases them, and they show their gratitude by leaving the house as fast as their little feet can take them. They are not skilled fighters, although they will defend themselves if cornered.

The work table positioned next to the hearth holds a variety of iron and clay pots, numerous rags, and a wooden washtub (a 3′ diameter bucket) with a slate scrubbing board.

The shelves are cluttered with clay jars of spices, mushrooms, herbs and various natural preservatives. The kitchen is filled with utensils that can be used as makeshift weapons. The barrel lying in the southeast corner has a primitive wooden spigot sticking out of it; the barrel holds cheap ale (10 gallons remaining).

Reynid, young hill giantess: hp 25; other stats identical to Veiga in area 6. Reynid inherited her mother's flame-red hair and morbid sense of humor. Her narrow build, toothy smile, and insolence come from her father.

Terry, Tod, Erol, Valerie, and Walter, halflings: AC 7; HD 1−1; hp 5, 4 (×2), 3, 2; MV 90′(30′); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to attack rolls with missiles; SD +1 initiative modifier; Save H1; ML 4 (8 normally); INT 11; AL L; SZ S; XP see "Concluding the Adventure"; RC/182.

The Bigger They Are . . .

The following text may be read or paraphrased to the players when Brufnu and Meveg arrive (four hours after the PCs reach the house).

The ground shudders underfoot as two huge giants come into view. The giants both stand about 12′ tall, but the female is much heavier. She studies the house carefully, like a concerned investor rather than a guest, trying to determine whether it suits her needs. The male giant is panting heavily. With one hand he grasps the handle of a large and weighty trunk. In his other hand he holds a club. His round potbelly protrudes from the rest of his body, and his mouth is packed with yellow teeth.

Brufnu, hill giant: AC 4; HD 8; hp 51; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1 weapon; Dmg 2d8 (club); SA hurl boulders for 3d6 hp damage; Save F8; ML 8 (10 if angered; see below); INT 9 (above average); AL C; SZ L; XP 650; RC/179; club, key to trunk (area 4) worn around neck.

Meveg, hill giantess: hp 40; ML 8; INT 7; other statistics as for Brufnu.

Unlike most giants, Meveg doesn't like to throw boulders and will not use this form of attack.

If the PCs inflicted damage on Brufnu's daughters or their cat, the giant grabs his hunter's net from area 3 and tracks the party down. (He's a skilled huntsman and possesses tracking skill.) If Brufnu has not yet offended his would-be mate, Meveg remains at the house to protect Brufnu's family from further harm (at least until Brufnu returns). PCs who are captured by Brufnu are clubbed to death.

If the PCs were careful not to harm Brufnu's family, the giant will not pursue them, nor does he consider the theft of his halfling captives or the druids' potions cause enough to instigate a confrontation. If, however, the PCs made off with a sizable amount of Brufnu's treasure, the giant will track them down and demand the return of his possessions. (He is civilized and tolerant to a degree.)

If Brufnu returns home to find the adventurers in his house, he commands them to surrender their valuables and depart, assuming they haven't ravaged his home and harmed his family. "Valuables" include the captured halflings, though Brufnu can be lulled into letting the PCs keep the druids' potions if the adventurers behave cooperatively.

Once the PCs have been dealt with, Brufnu turns his attention to Meveg. After introducing the giantess to his daughters (and showing off his many hunting trophies), Brufnu escorts Meveg into the kitchen. He points to the halflings and says, "Now you cook deez for me!" Meveg, incensed by Brufnu's sheer gall, delivers a solid right hook to his jaw and storms out of the house, vowing never to return. The dazed Brufnu casts off his civilized veneer and retaliates by clobbering Meveg with his club. Irked by Brufnu's display of barbarism, Meveg delivers a well-placed kick that stops Brufnu in his tracks.

With her treasure chest in tow, it takes the injured Meveg 3½ hours to reach her hovel (barring any interference from the PCs or the wooddrake). Brufnu, hunkered over and massaging a swollen jaw, follows Meveg as far as the outside door before retiring to his bedroom to contemplate a means of redeeming himself.

While Brufnu rests, Reynid and Veiga attempt to prepare Halfling Mignon for their father's dinner. Unless the PCs act quickly, the halflings will be cooked (poorly seasoned and charred to a crisp) and devoured!

Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs leave Brufnu's house (with or without the halflings and antidote flasks), they must still contend with the antagonistic wooddrake. If the PCs recovered the druids' potions, the wooddrake uses its thieving abilities to relieve the party of these items and hide them. If the PCs take suitable precautions, the wooddrake will simply leave. It returns in 1-4 hours, having lured wandering monsters in the party's direction (roll once on the Random Wilderness Encounter table).

Whether or not the wooddrake is still with the party, the DM should check for random encounters as the PCs make their way back to Wistil. (See "Wistil and the Wilderness.") If the adventurers injured or killed members of Brufnu's family, they may have to face the outraged hill giant. For the sake of game balance, the DM has the option of saving any encounter with Brufnu until the PCs are better equipped to defend themselves (unless the DM likes a good slaughterfest).

PCs who return to Wistil with the halflings and potions will be named guests of honor at a great picnic feast. An impromptu ceremony is later conducted in the poisoned orchard. Six village children are selected to pour the flasks of antidote onto the roots of the sickly trees. The others watch as the trees slowly begin to regain their health. Within hours, the trees are completely cured of their affliction.

If the wooddrake has been taken captive by the PCs, it confesses to poisoning the apple trees. The creature claims to work for Yulin Nell, a ruthless competitor. The halflings are too gentle and forgiving to retaliate against Yulin themselves, but they wouldn't mind if the PCs paid Yulin a visit and asked him (nicely) to stop poisoning their orchards.

If the PCs decide to visit Yulin Nell, they find him at his home near Keswig, tending his meager orchard. Yulin is a self-pitying middle-aged man with a sour outlook on life. He is not, however, a threat to the party or the halflings. He admits to giving an elf 20 gp to cause some trouble in Wistil, but he has yet to hear any news from the elf. (In fact, Yulin thinks he was cheated by the elf.) When asked to justify his behavior, Yulin claims he was drunk at the time. If the PCs intimidate him, Yulin promises to leave the halflings of Wistil alone.

Yulin Nell, human: AC 9; HD 1 – 1; hp 5; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; Save Normal Man; ML 6; AL N; S 10, I 9, W 7, D 12, C 10, Ch 6; XP 5; RC/197; knife.

If the wooddrake survives this adventure, it continues to cause trouble in the future. If necessary, it will use all its guile and natural thieving skills to escape the party, only to return at a later time. The DM can use this chaotic creature as a frequent antagonist in an ongoing campaign.

Awarding Experience

Players who rely entirely on swordplay to complete this adventure are likely to see their characters squashed like bugs. Brufnu and his clan are worthy opponents for mid-level PCs, let alone a whimpering bunch of 1st-3rd level ones. The PCs are encouraged to be resourceful and should be rewarded for their good ideas.

Here are the suggested party experience-point awards for completing story objectives:

—Identifying the wooddrake as the culprit responsible for poisoning the apple trees: 200 XP (only if the PCs figure this out by themselves).

—Each druidic potion recovered intact: 100 XP.

—Each halfling returned alive to Wistil: 150 XP.

—Overcoming or subduing Reynid, Veiga, or Kitty without killing or critically wounding them: double their XP value. Ω

MELODY

BY LEONARD AND ANN WILSON

A voice to make bards weep

Artwork by Terry Dykstra

Leonard and Ann are currently living happily ever after in the mountains of northwest Arkansas. Their idyllic life is marred only by a relentless plague of perverse inanimate objects that keep falling apart just when they are most needed.

This is Leonard's fifth and Ann's first appearance in DUNGEON® Adventures.

"Melody" is a short AD&D® adventure for 4-6 player characters of 6th-8th level (about 35 total levels) of no particular race or class. The plot works best for a group that tends toward good alignments, but any party may be drawn in by the adventure hook.

For the Dungeon Master

Some years ago, a half-elven bard named Varian found himself aboard a merchant ship that ran afoul of a flock of harpies. His talents salvaged what might otherwise have been a doomed expedition. In the aftermath of the battle, while privately mourning the fact that voices of such utter beauty should be wasted as the lure of such foul killers, Varian discovered an egg in the harpy nest. On a whim, he took it with him. So began the story of Melody.

Even before Melody hatched, Varian had decided to make her upbringing his life's work. Though his elven blood already gave him some natural resistance to her song, he searched tirelessly for magical talismans that would shore up his willpower. By the time she started singing, he was ready, and her voice rarely beguiled him out of his senses.

Though Melody was a carnivore by nature, her urbane and kindly foster father raised her to be a creature completely unlike her savage, filthy kin. Melody was raised as a cultured young lady who used her song only to entertain. She even possessed physical beauty to match her voice, transformed by a spell Varian had learned just for her.

The *sculpt features* spell (see sidebar) turned Melody into a strikingly beautiful creature who bore about as much resemblance to other harpies as an elf does to an orc. Her wings, legs, and tail resemble those of a golden eagle, not a vulture, and her upper body is that of a very attractive elven woman with violet eyes and long, silky, golden hair. Her small fangs, visible whenever she smiles broadly, are the only visible remnant of her original nature. She

even lacks the usual harpy stench, though there is no magic involved in that. She simply bathes and indulges in a fondness for tastefully discreet perfumes, giving her a light floral scent.

Melody grew up believing that she was something called an eoshee (an Elvish word meaning "faerie nightingale"), a race that Varian invented to satisfy his adopted daughter's curiosity about herself. Melody was old enough to remember her original homeliness before Varian learned the *sculpt features* spell, but she thinks she was simply an "ugly duckling." Varian altered her appearance very gradually with repeated applications of the spell over the course of several years, always casting it on her as she lay sleeping.

Melody is not the only one who believes she is an eoshee. In preparation for the day he would introduce his foster daughter to the world, Varian began spreading tales of this mythical race to anyone who would listen. He painted a verbal portrait of them as a benevolent race of faerie songbirds.

"The eoshee are birds of prey," the story goes, "but not monsters, for they stalk only unintelligent animals, as other civilized hunters do.

"If you are ever fortunate enough to meet an eoshee, treat her hospitably, for this rare beauty is a good omen and her song is the delight of the faerie court. The fair folk will smile on those who are kind to the eoshee, and their blessings will follow. But woe to the fool who reviles or abuses her, for you can be certain his blackened name shall be passed from sprite to spriggan, and sorrow will haunt him the rest of his days."

Since Varian first started telling this story, it has been added to the repertoire of more than a few of his fellow bards and circulated throughout his homeland. Many people already believe the eoshee are real.

When Varian at last felt Melody was ready for the life of a traveling performer, the two of them set off to tour the land together, Varian playing his harp as Melody sang. She had only to start singing as she approached a new town, and the entranced villagers would drop whatever they were doing to come and listen. By the time they drew close enough to come under the influence of the bard's mind-freeing counter song, even those who had never heard of an eoshee were too taken with Melody's unparalleled voice and handsome features to cause a scene over her strangeness.

No one who heard the duo perform would ever forget the indescribable, soul-stirring beauty of Melody's voice. Tragically, however, the tour came to an abrupt end only a few months after it began. Melody, Varian, and their retainers were ambushed on a lonely road by a band of ettins. All but Melody were slain. Melody was captured and locked away in the tower that the ettins had claimed as their home. She was spared for the sake of her beautiful voice, which had attracted the ettins' attention in the first place.

Now Melody spends most of her waking hours singing, both because the ettins demand it and because nothing else can ease the pain of her father's death. She has already inadvertently lured more than a few travelers to their doom. Formerly, Melody sang in public only with Varian's counter-song to keep listeners from becoming completely mesmerized, and she honestly has no idea how powerful her voice is.

The ettins, on the other hand, quickly realized what a prize meal ticket they had found. Travelers that they once had to look for now walk meekly up to their door to be slaughtered.

Beginning the Adventure

The ettins' lair is close to a lightly traveled road in any hilly or mountainous wilderness region the DM wishes. As the PCs approach, they hear Melody's song.

> At first you're aware of a creeping sense of melancholy that fills your thoughts for no apparent reason. It's only when you try to pin down the cause that you consciously hear the song, echoing faintly through the hills around you—a single, achingly beautiful feminine voice that burns its sorrow straight into your gut. The words are Elvish, but you don't have to speak that language to understand the sense of loss and heartache that fills every note.

PCs who fail their saving throws vs. spells are instantly mesmerized, though their companions may not notice for some time. Mesmerized PCs continue at an even pace down the road for about a quarter mile before turning off on a faint track to one side—the path that the ettins' victims have started beating

Sculpt Features (Alteration)
3rd-level wizard spell

3rd-level wizard spell
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 5 rounds
Area of Effect: Creature touched
Saving Throw: None

This cosmetic *polymorph* spell allows the caster to physically alter the appearance of any one creature touched, including himself. He may not cause the subject to grow new appendages, gain new organs, lose old ones, or otherwise alter its basic body structure. He is also unable to affect the subject's basic mass. He is free, however, to rearrange it to a considerable extent. By doing so, he can make the subject up to 10% taller or shorter than its original height, or create the visual illusion that the subject has gained or lost up to one third of its original weight.

Beyond these limitations, the caster can alter the subject's appearance as he chooses. He could make a man look like an elf, change a wolf into a Great Dane, turn a freckle-faced little girl into a haggard old woman, or cover a cow's hide with purple spots.

If the caster wishes to duplicate the exact features of a particular creature, he must possess either skill with disguises or artistic ability as a sculptor. If nonweapon proficiencies are being used in the game, the caster must make an appropriate skill check. If not, the caster must make an Intelligence check instead. If the check fails, the caster creates an imperfect copy.

An unwilling subject receives a saving throw to resist the spell's effects.

Because the effects of a *sculpt features* spell are cosmetic only, no system shock roll is required to survive the change and no magic is needed to maintain the change once it is made. The subject of a *sculpt features* spell does not radiate magic and does not return to its original form through death or a *dispel magic* spell. The subject's new features become its natural features. No one yet knows if the offspring of such a creature would inherit the parent's original features or the altered features.

The material components of this spell are a few drops of doppleganger blood and a powdered moonstone worth no less than 50 gp.

to their door. Even if none of the PCs are mesmerized, they notice the track leading off in the direction of the singing.

A quarter mile down the track, the PCs come around a small hill and get their first glimpse of the ettins' tower.

> The ancient, crumbled ruin of a stone fortress stands on the hillside above you. One lonely tower is all that remains standing, jutting toward the sky like a spear. The plaintive tones that led you here drift down on the breeze from the highest windows of the tower.
>
> As you draw nearer, you see the fair elven face of the singer, framed in flowing golden hair, watching you sadly through a narrow window slit.

Whatever the PCs do, Melody will not stop singing until they're inside the tower—she's learned the hard way that her captors insist on exactly that—but she'll do her best to warn them that they're in danger. None of her captors speak Elvish, so she's composed a warning in her Elvish song in hopes that those approaching will understand. Melody's warning appears in free verse here, but in Elvish it has the appropriate rhyme and meter:

> Beware and be ready,
> for my life is hostage,
> And death lurks within,
> The terror of the road
> you travel.
> Flee. Save yourselves,
> Unless you've the might
> to laugh at ogres,
> Else your bones only add
> to so many before.

Melody is not trying to speak in riddles, and is actually doing her best to tell the party what it's up against within the restrictions of the song and her own knowledge. In fact, she's being as explicit as she possibly can when she uses the word "ogres." Despite the *Monstrous Manual* definition of an ogre, Melody has never done any sagely research into the various species and classifications of giants. To her, any ugly, evil giant is an ogre.

The Tower

The ettins' tower is 75′ high and 60′ square, with a crenelated roof. Though it was designed with access from the third floor to the roof, a collapsing battlement has sealed the trap door under a 350-lb. slab of rock. The tower's two different colors of stone indicate that the walls have undergone at least one major reconstruction.

Anyone approaching within 100′ of the tower is assaulted by the awful stench of the ettins' living quarters.

The ettins share their tower with a small contingent of orogs, members of a tribe that lives in the vicinity. The orogs find the ettins' muscle very useful, and the two groups have always had a loose alliance. The orogs act as Melody's jailers because the best place to keep her is in one of the old cells on the third floor. The ettins weigh too much for the wooden stairs to support. In return for their help in dealing with any intruders who put up a fight, the orog tribe claims the lion's share of any treasure from the victims Melody reels in. The ettins are more interested in the fresh meat.

The orogs have no desire to change this arrangement by claiming Melody as their own prisoner. For one thing, that would needlessly antagonize their brutish allies. For another, the ettins currently bear the brunt of any battles with Melody's victims, and the orogs are perfectly happy not to expend their warriors' strength in skirmishes that someone else can fight for them. Most important, the orogs like having Melody attract attention to the ettins' lair rather than their own. If the lure ever backfires (say by drawing in an archmage or an entire army), the orog chieftain wants the problem to land in the ettins' lap, not his.

The ettins are too dull-witted to foresee any complications arising from their little scheme, and proudly go about thinking themselves terribly clever to have negotiated such a good deal with the orogs, who are clearly much too intimidated by the ettins to dare think of stealing their prize captive.

Ettins (3): INT low; AL CE; AC 3; MV 12; HD 10; hp 61, 50, 47; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 2d8/3d6 (1d10/2d6 if disarmed); SD surprised only on a 1; SZ H; ML 14; XP 3,000 each; MM/135 (Giant, Ettin). Each ettin is armed with two spiked clubs.

The band of ettins consists of a dominant male (61 hp), his mate (47 hp), and his flunky (50 hp).

Orogs (10): INT high; AL LE; AC 3; MV 6; HD 4, 3 (×9); hp 21, 15 (×9); THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +3; SZ M; ML 14; XP 270, 175 (×9); MM/281-282 (Orc); plate mail, battle axe, long bow, 12 sheaf arrows.

The 4-HD orog is the group's leader. He carries the keys to Melody's cell, to the chest on the second floor, and to the front doors of the tower. Each orog carries 5d20 sp and 8d6 gp on his person.

According to the *Monstrous Manual,* harpy song mesmerizes only humans and demihumans, so the ettins and orogs are unaffected, although they too are attracted by her beautiful voice.

The map shows where the tower's residents are if they are aware that the party is approaching.

If the PCs approach openly, they are automatically spotted. Cover is scarce near the tower, so without *invisibility* the only way PCs can approach stealthily is at night. Even then, the orogs have a cumulative 10% chance per party member to spot the intruders. This base chance should be modified for PC strategies such as casting *weather summoning* to blot out the moon or wearing dark clothing and blackened armor. The orogs have infravision, but it extends out to only 60′.

If the party does approach undetected, the orog sentries on the second and third floors will still be at the positions marked, but the orogs on the ground floor should be moved up to the second floor. During the day they sleep there. At night they gather around the table, drinking and gambling.

If it's night, assume that the ettins are still in the positions marked but not ready for an attack. Each is involved in his own activities: gnawing at a bone, stacking pebbles for amusement, or whatever. During the day they'll be asleep on their piles of furs. The pile in the southeast corner of the ground floor is shared by the leader and his mate.

Ground Floor

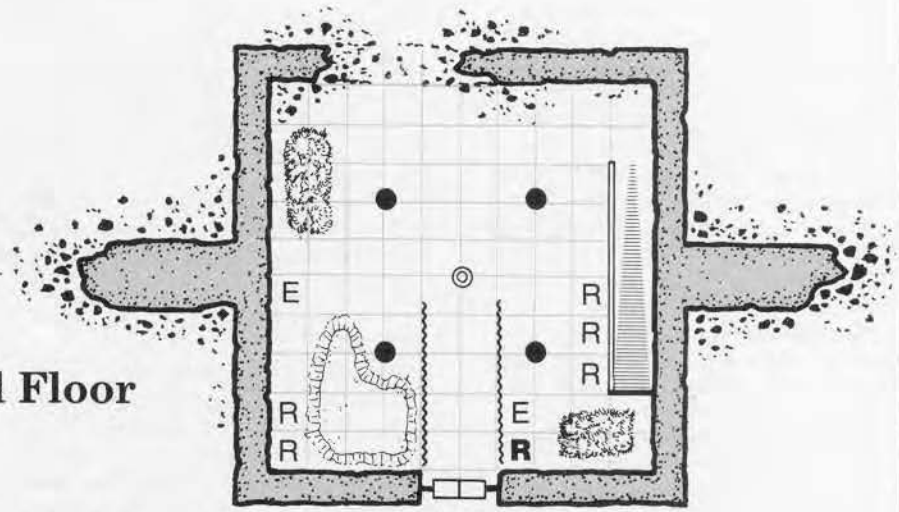
The following description assumes the PCs come in through the front doors (the path that mesmerized adventurers will choose). The natural approach to the tower is from that direction, so the PCs won't even see the hole in the back wall unless they go out of their way to scout the area.

> The stench of offal makes you gag as you open the doors. Beyond, you see a floor littered with layers of nauseating refuse. Just inside the doors, a pair of threadbare tapestries that are

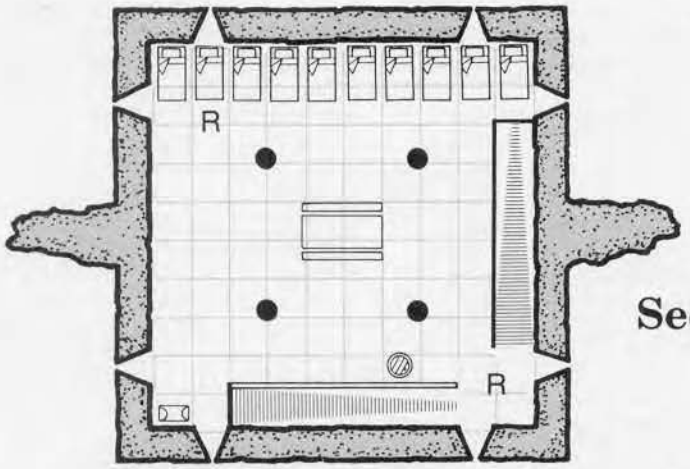
Melody's Tower

1 square = 5′

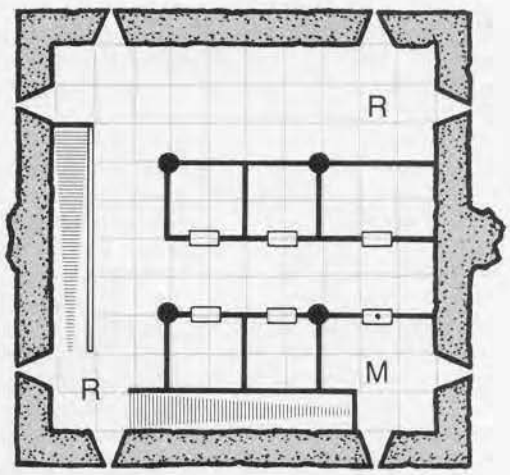
E = **Ettin**
R = **Orog Leader**
R = **Orog**
M = **Melody**



Ground Floor



Second Floor



Third Floor

falling apart with age have been hung to form a corridor toward the center of the room. On a plain stone pedestal at the end of that corridor, a human skull sits facing you.

The ground floor of the tower is the ettins' den and garbage dump. The outer doors are spring-loaded to snap shut and lock when a nearby rope is pulled. The orog leader standing beside the rope will tug it as soon as all the PCs are inside. Fortunately, Melody has learned that the boom of the doors slamming shut means her captors feel the trap is sprung and she's done her part, so she'll stop singing. The ettins and orogs have always assumed that Melody's victims would snap out of their trance at the first blow anyway, and Melody's never given them a chance to find out otherwise. Her song always falters as soon as she hears the sounds of combat.

The skull mounted on the pedestal is meant to draw attention to itself and give curious folk something to do besides peek behind the tapestries.

As soon as the doors snap shut, the ettin behind the tapestry to the east lurches through it, hoping to startle intruders into stepping back through the other tapestry and into the 15'-deep pit there. He receives a +4 bonus to surprise and automatically surprises anyone who was mesmerized. Each surprised adventurer must make a saving throw vs. paralysis or instinctively scramble away from the ettin and into the pit.

Any PCs who fall into the pit take 2d6 hp damage upon landing in the pile of bones at the bottom of the pit.

The orogs on the west edge of the pit rain arrows on any heroes still moving after the fall. All the other orogs and ettins move to box the party into the south end of the room, thus preventing escapes up the stairs or out the hole in the north wall.

On the second round of combat, the ettins close for melee, but the orogs hang back, entering into the general melee only if it looks like their help would make the difference between victory and defeat. If the ettins are obviously being overwhelmed, the orogs will flee and leave them to their fate without a second thought.

The leader of the ettins keeps a sack of 625 gp hidden in his pile of furs in the southeast corner.

A thorough search of the refuse will uncover Varian's spellbook, discarded as worthless by ettins and orogs alike. It contains the following spells: *alarm, cantrip, change self, detect magic, mending, read magic; alter self, deeppockets, sense shifting, Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter; item, sculpt features* (new), *tongues.*

Sense shifting appears in the *Tome of Magic*™ book and may be replaced with another second-level spell if *ToM* is not in use.

Second Floor

The second floor of the tower is the orogs' living space. Although somewhat shabby and far from spotless, it seems a bastion of military order next to the atrocious squalor of the ettins' quarters.

One of the orogs has hidden a small pouch of five 10-gp gems at the bottom of the water barrel. If a light source is held over the water, the pouch is clearly visible at the bottom.

The chest in the southwest corner is locked and holds loot that the orogs have collected for their tribe but not shipped home yet: 12 pp, 101 gp, 226 sp, 559 cp, a silver ring engraved with floral designs (30 gp), two suits of chain mail, and a grape-cluster pendant fashioned out of gold and amethysts (1,000 gp).

Third Floor

The third floor is dusty and unfurnished, pretty much unremarkable and unused except for the cell where Melody is kept. The doors of the cells are of stout wood, and each has a small, barred window at eye level. The windows offer an even more restricted view than the arrow slit through which the PCs first saw Melody, so until they actually open her cell door they shouldn't be able to see that she's anything but an elf.

When the PCs do see Melody, describe her in detail but avoid calling her a harpy. Let the players jump to their own conclusions.

The PCs may have heard rumors about the eoshee and may recognize Melody as matching the description of this race. Roll percentile dice for each PC as determined by class and level, according to the following table:

Bard: 5% per level
Wizard or Priest: 2% per level
Other: 1% per level

Modifiers:

+1% per level if the PC is a native of the land where this adventure takes place.

+2% per level if the PC possesses the local history proficiency for the land where this adventure takes place.

Inform any player whose character has heard of the eoshee that Melody fits the description of this mythical race and provide the player with the account given of the eoshee in "For the Dungeon Master."

If the PCs do react poorly to Melody, she will try to reason with them and make emotional appeals to allay their fears. If they attack, she cowers in terror. Only repeated blows will wake the huntress in her, but then she'll lash out like a fury, instinctively singing a wordless tune of battle. In her berserk rage, she won't rest until all her antagonists have died or fled, whether or not they've been transfixed by her song. If she survives, she'll fly off into the wilderness to be alone and do some serious soul-searching. The traumatic ordeal will have a profound effect on her character. Whether she rises above it or loses herself in the cold-blooded killer instinct of her race is up to you.

Melody (*polymorphed* harpy): INT average; AL NG; AC 7; MV 6, fly 15 (C); HD 7; hp 29; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6 or 1-3/1-3/by weapon type; SA *charm* humans and demihumans by song; SZ M; ML 13; MM/184.

Melody speaks Elvish and Common, and she is literate in both. She is also skilled at cooking, etiquette, singing (of course), and playing the harp. Melody is well versed in the local history of her homeland, and she is proficient with the short sword and the long bow.

Though fully grown, Melody is in many ways a naive and trusting child, having led a very sheltered life. Despite this, she possesses a mature self-discipline and a reflective nature far beyond her years. Varian was very careful to encourage this discipline to ensure she would never revert to the bestial ways of other harpies.

Still a huntress despite her upbringing, Melody prefers to stalk and kill her own meals when time allows, but she flatly refuses to eat the flesh of any sentient creature.

Considering her confinement, Melody is in pretty good shape. She's undergone only a minimum of persuasive torture,

and the orogs have seen to her needs diligently. After all, they want to keep their source of easy income in good health.

Concluding the Adventure

The presence of an orog tribe in the hills is a loose end that will probably not come up in the aftermath of the game, but that you may want to take note of for inspiring later adventures in your campaign.

If the PCs don't antagonize Melody, she thanks them profusely for setting her free, all the while shedding tears of relief. If the party treats her kindly, they'll have a friend for life.

Melody does realize that her singing attracted people to the tower, but she thinks it's from curiosity, not an overwhelming compulsion. Though she feels some guilt, she reasons that people lured in to face the ettins were put on their guard by the mysterious song and the old tower in the wilderness, which is better than being caught unprepared in an ambush along the road, as she and Varian were. She also figures that those who strayed off the road to investigate were the more adventurous sorts, those better able to defend themselves. Not that she's fooled herself into thinking she was doing any good deeds, of course—she knew that if she stopped singing, she would end up just another victim herself—but those are the arguments she uses to placate her conscience.

Whether or not the PCs try to convince Melody that her voice acted as an irresistible enchanted lure, sooner or later she will realize its effect on others. In neither case will she believe that the effect is something inherent in her song, however. Instead, she assumes it is a newly acquired curse, a poetic divine punishment inflicted on her for the role she played in the deaths of others. To rid herself of this curse, she will seek out a powerful priest of a god of music and offer to perform some quest for him that will earn her an *atonement* spell. She may ask the PCs to accompany her on her search, her quest, or both, going so far as to seek them out if they have already parted company. With Varian dead, they're the only friends she has.

An *atonement* spell might even work, in an unorthodox fashion. Once the spell attracts the attention of a music god to Melody's plight, he might decide it would further his own ends to make her fantastic voice more "audience friendly" by granting her full control over its *charming* ability. If not, she is traumatized by the failed *atonement* and the rejection it implies by the god of music. Melody flies off to become a hermit in the wilderness, with every intention of never singing another note.

If Melody can get her voice under control, she becomes a happy and gregarious nomad, flying from place to place to perform. Tales of the eoshee will have preceded her to most towns, spreading more rapidly the more she is seen, and smoothing her relations with humans. If she has trouble with humans despite her growing reputation, she'll likely end up performing exclusively for elven audiences, who are more tolerant of her differences and more appreciative of her talents.

If a PC bard wishes to join Melody or invites her to travel with him as a partner, she'll be glad for the company and the help in dealing with people. She may incidentally wind up in some of the bard's adventures, but she's a singer, not a hero or a treasure hunter, and she will not be a regular adventuring companion.

If Melody does find herself caught up in a dangerous situation with the PCs, be very careful about how she uses her voice to aid the group. She'll be deathly afraid of having it turned into a weapon again. They may be able to talk her into using her voice as a distraction or to aid in an escape, but if they ever betray her trust and kill someone she's transfixed, she'll never forgive them for it.

Finally, if it turns out that the effects of the *sculpt features* spell can be passed from its subject to her offspring, Melody may become the mother of a whole new race: the once mythical eoshee. Ω

Playtesters for Issues 46-48

"The Iron Orb of the Duergar" (#46), "Goblin Fever" (#46), "The Assassin Within" (#47), and "The Oracle at Sumbar" (#48): Christopher Perkins, James Brett, Paul F. Lynds, and Loren Cross.

"To Bite the Moon" (#48): Paul Culotta, Mike McIntyre, Adam McIntyre, Glen McIntyre, Nora Jane McIntyre, Todd Baughman, and Danny Eckelt.

SLEEPING DRAGON

BY BILL SLAVICSEK

Disturb not the sleeping dragon, nor the dracolich who wakes it.

Artwork by Peter Clarke

Bill is a staff designer and editor for TSR, Inc. His design credits include Elves of Athas, The Complete Book of Humanoids, Slave Tribes, *and* Night of the Walking Dead. *Before joining TSR, Bill turned out an extensive number of products for West End Games'* Star Wars, Torg, *and* Ghostbusters *lines. His* A Guide to the Star Wars Universe *was recently published by Del Rey Books, and his latest design for TSR is the* Council of Wyrms™ *boxed set. This adventure is for use in that setting.*

This AD&D® adventure is an introduction to TSR's new COUNCIL OF WYRMS™ campaign setting. The adventure pits a single adult silver dragon player character and its demihuman companion (called a "kindred") against the minions of a terrible dracolich. Here, we provide a ready-made dragon PC, its kindred, and enough information to run this one-on-one scenario. In play, a single player could run both dragon and kindred, or the pair can be divided between two players. The *Council of Wyrms* boxed set is recommended if the DM decides to expand the adventure, convert it for group play, or give players the opportunity to create their own dragon PCs.

If the DM decides to start a full-fledged dragon campaign, this adventure should take place after the four scenarios presented in the boxed set.

Important Note: The dragon PC presented here should not be transported into a normal AD&D campaign. He is designed to work in the specific setting detailed in *Council of Wyrms*, and his presence in a more traditional campaign could cause game balance problems. See the boxed set for more information, and for PCs that can be used in other campaign worlds—like the dragon slayer and the half-dragon.

Council of Wyrms Setting

This brief explanation is provided to introduce the DM and players to a world where dragon PCs exist. Additional information can be found in the *Council of Wyrms* boxed set.

The time is the distant past, on a world much like Toril or Mystara—with one major difference. In at least one corner of this world, dragons rule supreme. They control the islands of an isolated stretch of ocean—the islands of the Io's Blood chain. Here, dragon civilization is at its height. Dragon clans

inhabit and control cities that reflect the draconic mindset. Humans, who fill most other worlds, are virtually unknown among the Io's Blood islands. Other creatures—including elves, dwarves and gnomes—serve as vassals to the dragon lords. During their long lives, dragons select demihumans to bond with. These bonded demihumans are called kindred, and they share links with their dragons that go beyond the roles of servants and masters.

Though the dragon clans currently maintain cordial (or at least nonhostile) relations with each other, this was not always the case. Once these mighty creatures waged war after war in an effort to determine which dragon type and clan would rule over all the others. It took the intervention of Io's avatar and the threat of human dragon slayers to finally teach the dragons to cooperate with each other and live in peace.

The Council of Wyrms, made up of representatives from each of the dragon clans, arbitrates major disagreements to keep war from returning to the isles. Not only must the Council keep the dragons at peace, it must remain ever vigilant for signs of the dread human invaders who once nearly destroyed Io's children.

In this setting, dragon PCs start life as wards of the Council, learning to work with different dragon types as they study Io's message of harmony. Through juvenile age, these dragons perform a variety of jobs for the Council, including diplomatic missions, fact-gathering trips, and special quests that promote cooperation and maintain the peace. Once this period of training and service ends, the dragons return to their clans to begin a new stage of life, taking the friendships they have formed, as well as the ideals and aspirations of the Council, with them.

Adventure Background

During the last war that rocked the Io's Blood isles, the dragon clans mustered under two charismatic leaders. The metallic dragons rallied to the side of Exaurdon the Gold, while the chromatic dragons acquiesced to the leadership of Bloodtide the Red. The gem dragons tried to stay out of the conflict but found themselves fighting one side or the other, depending on where the battles occurred.

Not all of the chromatic dragon lords were content to follow Bloodtide. Many devised separate schemes and strategies, hoping to make their own clans the dominant force in the isles. The evil Infernis, lord of the red dragons of Clan Magma, for instance, conceived a terrible plan. In his thirst for power and dark desire for revenge, Infernis and his slaves developed a magical item with one frightful purpose. Named the *talon of final destruction*, the item had the power to call forth a creature strong and fierce enough to wreak death and devastation throughout the domains of the metallic dragons. (See sidebar on page 54.) This was to be Infernis's master stroke. While the metallic dragons were busy defending themselves and their lands from the creature, Infernis would wrest the chromatic dragons away from Bloodtide's control and lead them against soft and weak targets rich with plunder.

Before Infernis could unleash the power of the *talon,* however, a young silver dragon named Kagil Cloudwalker learned of the item's existence. Knowing he couldn't hope to win a direct confrontation with the venerable red dragon, Kagil took a less aggressive approach. The silver dragon stole the *talon of final destruction* from Infernis's lair and fled. Without the *talon,* Infernis could not complete his diabolical plan. In a terrible rage, Infernis chased after Kagil. The red dragon never caught up with the silver, however, because the evil one was intercepted by the gold dragon Baraster.

Baraster killed Infernis in a bloody battle just as human dragon slayers invaded the isles. Io's avatar had taught these humans himself, forging them into a real threat and whipping them into a religious frenzy to destroy the dragons of the Io's Blood isles. (This was Io's method for teaching his children to live in peace, hoping they would band together in the face of an external threat.) Infernis was forgotten, his reign of terror ended before it had even begun.

Young Kagil witnessed the reconciliation of the dragons. The metallic, chromatic, and gem dragons joined forces to repel the invaders, finally learning the benefits of cooperation. Kagil saw the birth of the Council of Wyrms, as relative peace settled over the islands. These were fantastic times, but a darkness shrouded his happiness. Kagil still possessed the *talon of final destruction*, and it constantly haunted his thoughts. He tried to destroy it, but nothing worked. He contemplated throwing it away, but he feared that it would fall into the possession of another Infernis.

With no other option, Kagil placed the enormous *talon* in his treasure hoard and guarded it for the rest of his long life. He spent the centuries trying to decide what to do with it, hoping to find a solution before his life reached its natural end (marked by the time called dragon's twilight). Using a method known to only a few ancient great wyrms, Kagil Cloudwalker transformed himself into a guardian of the land, what the legends call a sleeping dragon.

A sleeping dragon chooses a part of the land close to its own nature, usually in a place it loved during its life. Then, through a process somehow related to the 12 periods of growth all dragons undergo from hatchling to great wyrm, the dragon transforms itself into a part of the land—a sparkling lake, a desert oasis, or, as in Kagil's case, a majestic hill. Legends claim that a portion of a sleeping dragon's treasure hoard survives the process, waiting in a hidden, protected part of the newly formed landscape. Kagil's remaining hoard waits in the caves beneath the hill he has become. Among these items rests the *talon of final destruction.*

Now Infernis has returned to threaten the dragons of the Io's Blood isles through arcane means. As a collector of dark magic, Infernis was familiar with many legends concerning immortality and returning from the dead. He had his clan wizards devise a contingency should he fall in battle. Their solution was to imbue him with necromantic spells that would activate upon his death and transform him into an undead creature of enormous power. The necromantic magic—far from an exact science—did not work exactly as Infernis's wizards planned, and the transformation took a long, long time.

The dread dracolich Infernis has been secretly setting his plans of conquest and destruction back into motion. Seeking to test his powers slowly, the dracolich took control of the relatively weak black dragons of Clan Blackmoon. He issues orders from hiding through his manipulation of Lord Deathstream, leader of the clan. His desire for revenge goes far beyond controlling a single clan, however. He has been

Continued on page 54

Agoron Cloudwalker

Adult Male Silver Dragon

Dragon PC Kit
6th Level/17 HD
Lawful Good

Clan Cloudwalker
102 years old
64′ body length, 28′ tail length

Strength 17	Intelligence 12
Dexterity 9	Wisdom 13
Constitution 11	Charisma 15

Armor Class: −5
Hit Points: 95
Movement: 9, Fly 30 (C), Jump 3
Magic Resistance: 30%

Combat proficiencies: Claw attack, claw/claw, bite, claw/claw/bite, dragon flight, aerial combat, stall, tail slap, breath weapon (*cone of cold*)

Noncombat proficiencies: Kindred bond (11), alertness (14), danger sense (14), hunting (12), language (metallic dragon) (12), language (High Draconic) (12), reading/writing (13), wizard spellcraft (10), stewardship (12), survival (mountains) (12), tracking (13)

Special abilities: Communicate with any intelligent creature, magical abilities at 12th level, infravision to 120′, dragon senses 65%, immune to cold, *polymorph self* three times per day, *cloud walk*, *feather fall* twice per day, *wall of fog* once per day, *control winds* three times per day

Innate spells (cast each once per day): *detect magic*, *light*; *mirror image*, *scare*; *lightning bolt*

Equipment: dragon jewelry (earrings, necklaces, arm bands, etc.); kindred amulet (the physical representation of the bond shared by Agoron and Larala); large pouch; potion of *extra healing; long sword +1* (for use in *polymorphed* form); elven clothing (for use in *polymorphed* form)

Attack Type	#AT	Att Adj/ Dmg Adj	THAC0	Damage	Range
Claw	1	–/+6	4	1d8	front, sides
Claw/claw	2	–/+6 (×2)	4	1d8/1d8	front, sides
Bite	1	–/+6	4	5d6	front, sides
Claw/claw/bite	3	–/+6 (×3)	4	1d8/1d8/5d6	front, sides
Tail slap	1	–/+6	4	2d8	rear, sides
Breath weapon	1/3	–/–	–	12d10+6	80′ long, 5′ wide at mouth 30′ wide at end
Long sword*	1	−1/+1	5	1d8/1d12	–

* used in *polymorphed* form

Saving Throws

DM	RSW	PP	BW	Sp
3	5	4	4	6

Background: Agoron is a member of Clan Cloudwalker and a nephew of Lord Agrannus, leader of the clan. He holds the rank of champion, the first earned title among the *dominates* of the clan. (The term for any dragon with a noble rank is dominate. Like the term "noble," dominate is a general class that is divided into specific titles such as champion, advocate, and lord advocate.)

Agoron spent his early years at the Council Aerie, learning from the custodians and performing services for the Council of Wyrms. He bonded with his current kindred, Larala, when he was a juvenile of 32 years. In the 70 years they have been together, the two have grown to respect and even love each other. Agoron is master, but he is also companion and friend to the elf mage Larala.

Kind and helpful, with a cheery disposition offset by a low tolerance for evil deeds, Agoron is the epitome of a silver dragon. While he hopes to help govern his clan's domain and possibly even participate in the Council of Wyrms, for now he is content to travel the isles to promote the ideals of goodness and harmony among dragonkind. He spends a considerable amount of time in elf form (his preferred *polymorph* form), moving in places where dragons seldom tread and enjoying the company of his kindred.

Agoron's dreams have made him edgy of late. He feels an urgent need to do something, though he doesn't yet know what that something is. In his dreams, Agoron sees a silvery hill of cloud. It is a sacred place, he knows, a place of tranquility and goodness. But dark shadows surround the hill, moving closer and closer until the hill itself screams out in terror and rage. What does it all mean? Perhaps the next dream will provide a clue.

Polymorphed Form: Agoron uses his innate *polymorph self* ability to transform into a male elf. He retains all of his ability scores, Hit Dice, hit points, Armor Class, saving throws, and innate abilities. He doesn't gain any of an elf's natural abilities except movement (12). Instead, he uses his own infravision, dragon senses, and THAC0. In elf form, Agoron loses the dragon flight ability as well as all dragon-specific combat forms, including claws, bite, and breath weapon. He carries an enchanted long sword to defend himself in elf form, though he fights with a +2 nonproficiency attack penalty. The sword and his elf clothing are stored in a large pouch that Agoron wears slung at his side. He must remove the sword and clothing prior to *polymorphing*, as the pouch melds into his dragon form.

Larala Firstleaf

Female Elf Kindred

Fighter/Wizard
6th Level/7th Level
Lawful Good

Clan Cloudwalker
170 years old
5′ tall

Strength 13	Intelligence 15
Dexterity 15	Wisdom 14
Constitution 10	Charisma 17

Armor Class: 4
Hit Points: 28
Movement: 12

Weapon proficiencies: Long sword, long bow, dagger, heavy lance, quarterstaff

Nonweapon proficiencies: Kindred bond (12), dancing (15), fire building (13), language (elven) (15), language (metallic dragon) (15), language (High Draconic) (15), reading/writing (16), spellcraft (13), ancient history (14)

Special abilities: 90% resistance to *sleep* spells, resistant to all *charm*-related spells, +4 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls when alone and in nonmetal armor, 60′ infravision, find secret doors on 1 or 2 on 1d6, find concealed portals on 1-3 on 1d6.

Spells: *detect magic, detect undead, feather fall, magic missile; detect evil, invisibility, web; fireball, wind wall; ice storm.*

Equipment: chain mail, *long sword +2*, dagger, long bow, quiver of 12 sheaf arrows and six *sheaf arrows +1*, quarterstaff, large belt pouch, flint and steel, two glass bottles, three parchment sheets, quill pen, writing ink, spellbook, spell components, potion of *healing,* kindred amulet.

Attack Type	#AT	Att Adj/ Dmg Adj	THAC0	Damage	Range
Long sword	1	+1/—	15	1d8/1d12	—
Long bow	2	+1/—	15	1d8/1d8	5/10/17
Dagger	1	—/—	15	1d4/1d3	—
Quarterstaff	1	—/—	15	1d6/1d6	—

Saving Throws

DM	RSW	PP	BW	Sp
11	9	11	3	10

Background: Larala Firstleaf was born to one of the vassal elf tribes of Clan Cloudwalker. Though she was apprenticed to her tribe's high wizard at an early age, Larala longed for more physical pursuits. She was allowed to study both the arcane and martial arts, thus slowing her progress but expanding her range of skills. At the young age of 68, a dominate of the royal brood selected Larala to begin training as kindred to a soon-to-be-hatched silver dragon: Agoron.

In their years together at the Council Aerie, Larala and Agoron became the best of friends. By the time Agoron was ready to enter into the kindred bond, there was no doubt that Larala was to be his elf kindred. Larala cares deeply for the silver dragon and even loves him. Her place is at his side, helping him in whatever endeavors he sets his sights on.

Larala is a beautiful elf with long silver hair, cool blue eyes, and a trim, strong figure. She worries about the dreams that haunt Agoron's sleep, wishing there were something she could do to end them. Dreams have meaning, she knows, though the trick lies in deciphering that meaning in time to make a difference. Time, she fears, is not as plentiful as Agoron thinks.

Continued from page 51

searching for the magical talon that the silver dragon Kagil stole from him ages before, and has finally located Kagil's probable resting place. All that remains is for Infernis's many servants—both living and undead—to break into the sleeping dragon's resting place and find the *talon of final destruction.*

Infernis wants to summon the mighty tarrasque with the *talon*'s enchantment. By unleashing the creature on All Clans Island during a gathering of the Council of Wyrms, Infernis plans to kill a number of dragon leaders and wreak havoc on the dragon domains. He believes these deaths will provide an atmosphere of chaos for him to take advantage of. Time is short, however, because once Infernis's forces start searching for Cloudwalker Hill, Kagil will soon awaken to his full power. A guardian of the land has powerful innate abilities and is much stronger than a dracolich. Infernis's only chance is to recover the *talon* before Kagil's powers reach full strength and he awakens, for until that happens the sleeping dragon is nothing more than a dreaming hill.

Kagil, though, is not without his own allies. He has sent requests for aid to his descendant, Agoron Cloudwalker, whom he needs to protect him until he fully awakens. These requests have arrived as dreams and waking visions, disturbing Agoron until he answers the persistent, urgent summons. In these dreams, something dark and foul has intruded on a sacred place. But the place is more than a place. It is a dragon, and it calls to Agoron, pleading for help before evil is again set loose in the isles.

The *Talon of Final Destruction*

The *talon of final destruction* is a magical item crafted by Infernis and his wizard vassals centuries ago. Made from the talon of a juvenile gold dragon, this sword-length, rune-encrusted item can be activated by use of the command word "Magma."

Once activated, the *talon*'s enchantment summons the legendary tarrasque to the user. The *talon* allows the summoner to give a single command that the tarrasque must obey. For example, if Infernis summons the dread creature, he will order it to attack All Clans Island (site of the Council of Wyrms Aerie). The order lasts for the span of the tarrasque's activity cycle (1d6 + 8 days). At the end of this time, there is a 50% chance that the tarrasque will not immediately return to dormancy but will instead seek to destroy the being that called it forth.

Once activated, the gold talon begins to age quickly, eventually crumbling into dust as the magic is used up. The item completely disintegrates when the enchanted command wears off. Infernis does not have the resources or vassals to craft another enchanted talon at this time, but if he survives the encounter with Kagil, he will certainly begin gathering them.

In the scope of this adventure, the tarrasque should not be summoned. If Agoron fails, however, the DM may want to develop an adventure featuring the ravaging tarrasque. See the *Monstrous Manual* (page 339) for information and statistics on this killing machine.

Playing a Dragon

The following information is summarized from the *Council of Wyrms* boxed set.

Take a look at the character sheet provided for Agoron Cloudwalker (page 52). The first difference you'll notice is that dragon PCs have *combat* and *noncombat* proficiencies instead of weapon and nonweapon proficiencies. Combat proficiencies cover the skills a dragon learns in order to make the best use of its natural abilities. Noncombat proficiencies are draconic versions of learned skills that don't directly relate to battle. Many of the combat proficiencies are self-explanatory. *Dragon flight* allows Agoron to make full use of his natural flying ability and Movement Rate. *Aerial combat* gives Agoron a +2 attack bonus while flying. (There are other details, but they shouldn't come into play in this adventure.) *Stall* lets Agoron fly near the ground and halt his forward motion for one round, though he must land immediately in the next round. While stalled, he can attack with his bite and all four claws. Finally, *tail slap* allows Agoron to strike opponents to his rear and sides with his muscular, spiked tail. The tail can strike a number of opponents equal to Agoron's age category (6), but a successful attack roll is needed to hit each opponent. An opponent struck by a tail slap takes damage and must make a successful saving throw vs. petrification (with a +6 penalty) or be stunned for 1d4 + 1 rounds.

The noncombat proficiencies operate much like nonweapon proficiencies of the same name in the *Player's Handbook,* although a few are new to the *Council of Wyrms* setting. They do not affect the play of this adventure but are included in case the character will be used in an ongoing dragon campaign.

Agoron also has an innate *dragon senses* ability. This provides him with excellent senses of sight, smell, and hearing, as well as infravision to 120'. With these enhanced senses, he can detect all invisible objects and creatures (including creatures or items hidden in darkness or fog) within a radius of 60'. With a successful dragon senses roll on percentile dice, Agoron can spot secret and concealed doors, invisible or hidden creatures, traps, and other things not in plain sight.

Getting Started

Once you've read through this adventure and are ready to run it, give the character sheets to your player (or players). Also, allow the player to read the "Introduction," as it provides background information on the dragon setting.

The adventure's action includes encounters, events, and various paths from one area to the next. Not every event described in each area will take place, as the events depend on the PC's actions. On the other hand, you may have to add a scene or two if the player comes up with something unexpected for the characters to do (and this *is* going to happen!).

If you have the *Council of Wyrms* boxed set and want to run this module as an adventure for a group of dragon player characters, increase the number of monsters in each encounter. Also, because only three of the possible 10 dragon PC types can assume a demihuman form, the party must consist of gold, silver, or bronze dragons but can include the kindred from other dragon races.

Cloud City

The adventure begins in Cloud City, the Clan Cloudwalker community high atop the Silver Mountains on Silver Island. The city extends from the rocky peaks

to the permanent cover of cloud that surrounds the mountaintops. The silver dragons have not only carved the mountaintop and built edifices of stone, but they have also used powerful enchantments to fashion structures of solid cloud, creating the permanent white embankments that give the city its name.

Agoron's Dream

As Agoron's dreams become more vivid and urgent, the images spill across the bond he shares with his kindred, Larala Firstleaf, a female elf. Both Agoron and Larala experience the latest dream equally, and it starts the adventure.

> Dragon and kindred toss and turn as something disturbing slips into their dreams. It is a cry of anguish, a call for help, and it reverberates through the corridors of sleep. As one, the two of you rise into the night sky. The lofty spires of Cloud City drop away with dizzying speed until you can see the many cloud-shrouded peaks of the Silver Mountains. The call comes again. "Come, my grandchild," the dream voice insists. "Come to my hill. I need you. Danger stalks the land, and it carries death for Clan Cloudwalker and all dragonkind."
>
> Moving now, you speed away from the mountains like the wind before a storm, flying over thick jungle, crashing through dense rain forest. Beware! Something watches from the dream shadows. If it sees you, it will attack. Swiftly, you are pulled along like flotsam in a strong current, to the source of the dream voice.
>
> "Hurry, child of Cloudwalker," it cries, its haunting voice rising out of a mist-cloaked hill. "The dead one has come, and I have not yet the power to repel him!" Movement ends as abruptly as it began, and you both stand before the hill, a silvery mound rising out of the steamy jungle. Suddenly, the ground around the hill cracks and breaks. Hands and claws reach up out of the ground to grab the hill. But these are not fresh, vibrant, living arms; they are skeletal, flesh-peeled, decayed limbs. They sink rotted fingers with putrid talons into the earth. The hill screams once, then disappears into the ground as the dead limbs pull it down.
>
> As one, both of you come fully awake. But the dream voice follows you out of sleep, a haunting, persistent, slow-to-fade summons. "Beware Infernis, but hurry. Kagil has need of your claws and wings . . ."

Agoron should want to go in search of the source of his dream visions. He knows that the eastern portion of Silver Island is covered by thick jungle. Vassal races maintain a few villages in the foothills of the Silver Mountains, as well as on the island's shore, but much of the jungle itself remains wild and unexplored.

Before striking out into the jungle, Agoron and Larala might want to seek help and information from the resources of Cloud City. To warn the clan of impending danger or to ask for assistance, Agoron must request an audience with Cagerol, a lord advocate (see below). To find information on dream visions, a mist-cloaked hill, or a dragon named Kagil, Agoron should seek out either a dragon sage, a great wyrm, or an ancient vassal willing to talk to him. In this case, go to "Seeking Knowledge."

Sometime before he leaves the city but after he meets with the lord advocate, Agoron is approached by a green dragon from Clan Foulgrove. Jerverdi the Green wants to find out what's going on among the silver dragon clan so that she can report to her dragon lord. See "The Green Dragon" for details.

Agoron and Larala might come up with other options while in Cloud City. Use the provided encounters as guidelines and improvise from there.

Cagerol, the Lord Advocate

If Agoron tries to meet with a leader of his clan, he is turned away by the vassals of Lord Agrannus ("The dragon lord has gone to All Clans Island to participate in a session of the Council of Wyrms"), refused an audience with the clan's grand lord advocate (the second in charge), and given the runaround by the servants of the lords advocate. Finally, one lord advocate decides to hear the dragon out. The old silver dragon named Cagerol is an older broodling of Agoron's *draca* (mother).

Cagerol has great strength and influence, and he recognizes Agoron as a sibling. As with all dragons, family ties go only so far, but Cagerol has a fond spot in his heart for the youngster. He also recognizes that Agoron is gaining power and influence of his own, and may one day become an important ally. Cagerol agrees to meet with Agoron, inviting the dragon and his kindred into the lord advocate's public lair.

> An elf vassal leads you into the carved stone lair of Cagerol, one of the clan's lord advocates. The huge, airy cavern has one open wall that looks out onto the city. Cloud formations decorate the interior, displaying both taste and opulence to those fortunate enough to be granted an audience. The vassal directs you to a place of comfort, a cloud-covered platform of smooth, warm rock.
>
> A few moments go by. Then another elf enters the chamber. He is tall for an elf and appears strong, with a proud bearing and clothes of purest silver. "Welcome, Agoron," the elf calls in a friendly tone. "How may I help a sibling this fine, sunny day?" With that, the elf shifts form and grows before your eyes. In a few blinks, he transforms into the silver dragon Cagerol.

Cagerol is a practical dragon, not given to flights of fancy or easily swayed by portents and omens. He listens to his younger sibling but refuses to rouse the clan simply because a dragon has been having bad dreams. "We have enough problems keeping the clan from panicking over the occasional raids of Clan Vermilion," he responds smoothly. "I will not upset them because you are having trouble sleeping."

If Agoron persists, Cagerol gives him permission to explore the eastern jungles but refuses to provide him with any help. "If you find more information, bring it back and I'll decide then if more action is needed," the lord advocate says in dismissal.

If a foolish PC tries to return to Cloud City with rumors or witnesses from the jungle, Kagil sends increasingly more potent and desperate dreams asking for help. If Agoron returns to Cloud City despite the increasing dreams, Cagerol provides a small army, but it will be too late—Infernis will have recovered the *talon*. See "Concluding the Adventure" for possible future adventures.

Cagerol knows nothing about a sacred hill or the meaning of dreams about voices and dead-limbed monsters. He knows only that Kagil was an ancestor who fought in the dragon wars and became a prominent member of the clan. He has heard that Kagil was an unusually quiet dragon lord, as if he had some secret shame or burden. Cagerol knows even less about Infernis,

and none of the details about the *talon of final destruction* or Kagil's transformation into a sleeping dragon. He humors his sibling but doesn't take any of this dream business very seriously.

Seeking Knowledge

With a little persistence, Agoron can locate someone willing to talk about the meaning of dreams and the ancient history of the clan. The DM should work out the details and meeting places where Agoron and Larala encounter the following nonplayer characters. If the player is having trouble, Cagerol can mention them.

Magika, a female silver dragon sage, is an absent-minded scholar. She loves to share what she knows with those who will listen (and who offer her some arcane tome or historical text, such as those available in the Cloud City bazaar). She has a tendency to explain everything in great detail, providing more information than anyone (except perhaps another dragon sage) could ever want. Her field of expertise is the history of the Cloudwalker Clan.

Magika knows about Kagil and Infernis, and can relate this history with one minor alteration. She doesn't know that Kagil stole a magical item from Infernis, though he did sometimes speak of a dark thing he guarded. She knows no details concerning it. Kagil disappeared sometime after advancing to the age of great wyrm, but his fate remains a mystery to this day.

The dragon sage takes great stock in the worth of dreams and visions. She advises Agoron to seek out this dream hill and find the source of the voice. "You have been chosen, champion," the sage declares. "To refuse the call could lead to disaster—both for you and the clan." The sage may even attempt to decipher the meaning of the dream, but she believes that dreams are mostly symbolic. For example, the hill represents a goal or wish that Agoron has, and the dead limbs his fear of failure. This, of course, is wrong, but it could be fun to point the PCs slightly off track as they head out into the jungle.

Helag, a silver great wyrm, dislikes visitors. It will take a great deal of convincing and an appropriate gift to make Helag accept the presence of visitors in his huge lair of solid cloud. However, he has a keen interest in elven art, and he will be more friendly to Larala than to Agoron.

Helag knows the legends of a sacred place called Cloudwalker Hill. It is located somewhere to the east, in the jungle. It is in sight of the peaks of Cloud City but hidden by tropical forest and mist.

Corelveron, an ancient elf vassal, can shed light on the red dragon Infernis, though he knows nothing about Infernis's plans, current state as a dracolich, or the *talon*. He knows that Kagil participated in the battle against Infernis, and that the red dragon was seeking the silver when Baraster challenged Infernis to his last fight. Corelveron can also explain the legends of sleeping dragons to Agoron, but he does not necessarily believe that such a transformation is possible. However, there are legends of a guardian of the land contacting its descendant through dreams when something of extreme importance must be conveyed. Corelveron requires nothing in return for his help; he serves his dragon masters readily.

The Green Dragon

Sometime during Agoron and Larala's wanderings around Cloud City—but after they have visited the lord advocate—they are approached by a green dragon from Clan Foulgrove. Jerverdi, an adult green dragon, is in Cloud City to negotiate a trade agreement with the silver dragons. While Clan Foulgrove does want the ores pulled from the Silver Mountains, Jerverdi also seeks information that would give her clan an edge in its dealings with Clan Cloudwalker and in the Council of Wyrms.

When she notices that Agoron has been trying to gain an audience with the leaders of the clan, she takes an immediate interest. When he actually spends time with a lord advocate, she becomes very excited indeed. Perhaps whatever information the silver dragon possesses could be used to great advantage by her own clan.

Jerverdi follows Agoron around for a while, waiting for the right opportunity to approach him. When she catches him and his kindred alone, she makes her move, introducing herself and striking up a conversation. As an honored guest of the clan, Jerverdi can come and go as she pleases. Agoron should not be surprised by her presence in Cloud City, but he might be surprised by her interest in him.

Jerverdi asks lots of questions and listens intently, though she rarely gives anything away herself. She starts by asking where she can find something in the city (such as an expert crafter or a particular kind of food), then comments on the good weather and lovely view. She eventually attempts to steer the conversation toward what she wants to know. "Do you know Lord Advocate Cagerol? Could you introduce me to him? Is something wrong, friend? You seem distracted." If Agoron or Larala let something slip, Jerverdi volunteers to accompany them on their quest (after she has had an opportunity to send a message to her dragon lord). If they refuse to tell her anything of importance, she excuses herself. Then she does her best to follow the pair around the city and into the jungle.

Jerverdi, mature adult green dragon: INT very; AL LE; AC −3; MV 9, fly 30 (C), swim 9; HD 16; hp 81; THAC0 5; #AT 3 plus special; Dmg 1d8/1d8/2d10 (claw/claw/bite); SA +7 damage to all physical attacks, chlorine gas breath weapon once every three combat rounds (Dmg 14d6+7); SD immune to gases; SZ G (64′ body, 58′ tail); ML 16; XP 15,000; MM/67.

Saving throws: DM 4, RSW 6, PP 5, BW 4, Sp 7.

Special abilities: communicate with any intelligent creature, magical abilities at 13th level.

Innate abilities: *water breathing, suggestion* once per day, *warp wood* three times per day.

Wizard spells (once per day each): *change self, friends, hypnotism, unseen servant.*

The Jungle

Eventually, Agoron and Larala will be ready to strike out into the jungle. Following the advice of Helag, Agoron may decide to travel directly east of Cloud City to find a hill in sight of the silver dragon metropolis. Otherwise, the dragon champion and his kindred may just begin searching and hope something turns up.

Take a look at the Silver Island map on page 57. Cloudwalker Hill is approximately 50 miles from Cloud City. The player should declare how the PCs are traveling, either on foot or flying. Larala is not a trained dragon

rider. She can ride on Agoron's back, but neither of them receive any of the benefits given true dragon riders and their mounts (as described in the boxed set).

A. Ogre Settlement and Wounded Ogre. The ogres living here serve the silver dragons. They know nothing about the events happening to the east, but they can tell Agoron that an ogre hunting party hasn't returned yet from a trip in that direction. The ogres aren't too worried, as the party is only a day or so overdue. After the PCs leave the settlement, the heroes encounter the surviving member of the hunting party about 10 miles to the east.

The hunting party was traveling through the jungle when it encountered Infernis gazing at the mist-cloaked hill. Before the ogres could slip away, Infernis spotted them and belched out a stream of fire. Only one of the ogres survived, though it was badly wounded. Agoron and Larala come upon the burned ogre as he stumbles into a clearing and falls to the ground.

The ogre's statistics are not provided because he is close to death and in no condition to fight or flee. If either PC uses a potion of *healing* on the ogre, award an additional 1,000 XP. No matter what the heroes do, the ogre awakens only long enough to whisper, "fire . . . bone dragon . . . all dead . . . misty hill . . ." He can tell them little else unless massive healing magic is provided.

B. Lizard Men. Lizard man patrols protect the lizard man village from the black dragons currently loose in the jungle. There are 2-8 lizard men in each patrol, sweeping area B. While the PCs are traveling through this area, roll 1d6 every turn. On a roll of 1 or 2, the PCs stumble across a lizard man patrol. On a roll of 6, the PCs meet a pair of wyverns. In this case, go to area D.

Because the lizard men are frightened and anxious, they attack anything that looks like a dragon—including Agoron. Unless Agoron is in demihuman form, the lizard men will try to knock him from the sky with javelins. (They each carry two javelins.) On the ground, the lizard men set an ambush and attack from all sides, first tossing javelins, then closing to melee with clubs. If Agoron is encountered in elf form, the lizard men do not attack but instead ask for help.

After two rounds of combat, if Agoron makes a point of stressing his identity as a silver dragon of Clan Cloudwalker, the lizard men stop fighting and beg forgiveness. They request the help and protection of the mighty dragon of Clan Cloudwalker. "Black dragons roam the jungle," the leader of the patrol explains. "They attacked a hunting party and killed almost a dozen of our tribe. They wait in hiding ahead. Please help us."

An encounter with a lizard man patrol provides the PCs with a warning that the black dragons lie in ambush around the hill, reducing the dragons' surprise bonus from +6 to +4. Of course, the PCs can benefit from this knowledge only if they talk with the lizard men.

Lizard men (2-8): INT low; AL N; AC 5; MV 6, swim 12; HD 2+1; hp 14 (×3), 13, 11, 10, 9 (×2); THAC0 19; #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d6 (claw/claw/bite) or 1d6 (javelins) or 2d4 (clubs); SZ M (7' tall); ML 14; XP 65 each (120 if the PCs talk to them); MM/227.

The village of the lizard men is located southeast of Cloud City, approximately 15 miles from the sleeping dragon's hill. The small community has mobilized itself, sending patrols into the jungle to defend the village from the

black dragon invaders. Since the initial alert, the village shaman has informed the lizard man king that something else rises from its sleep in the jungle. The shaman is receiving dream visions similar to Agoron's, and he is extremely frightened by what these visions might mean. He has spent long hours crafting a special weapon for use against the dread creature he sees in his dreams.

While the PCs are traveling in area B, a lizard man shaman approaches and greets them. No matter what form Agoron wears, the shaman recognizes him for what he is, the silver dragon called by the guardian of the land. If the PCs are flying, the shaman uses *pyrotechnics* to attract their attention, casting this spell on a fire to send a thick, writhing stream of smoke spiraling into the air. If they travel on foot, he simply steps out of the jungle in front of them.

> A lizard man, wearing a variety of bones, feathers and animal teeth, bows before you. His raspy voice is low, but you can make out the broken words of the metallic dragon language. "Grand Master," the lizard man says, using the formal address for all adult dragons, "you are the dream champion, called to aid the guardian of the land. I have seen the visions, too. Will you stop at our village and listen to the words of our king?"

If Agoron refuses, the shaman calls after him as he turns away. "A slayer of dragons waits beneath the hill," the shaman warns. "Not all the dead lie still this day, Grand Master."

If Agoron agrees to go to the village, the lizard men welcome him as an honored guest. The tribe acknowledges the dominance of the silver dragons, and many hope that Agoron will help them against the terrors loose in the land. The lizard king pays the proper respect to Agoron, then asks why the dragon has come to this part of the jungle. If Agoron answers truthfully, the king nods and responds, "Dreams and black dragons—will our problems never end?"

The lizard king gives the PCs more information about the activities of the three black dragons, reducing the blacks' surprise bonus from +6 to +2. He also provides the exact location of the mist-cloaked hill. Then he motions for the shaman to approach.

The shaman provides this additional bit of information: "A slayer of dragons waits beneath the hill, and not all the dead lie still. You must save the dragon's claw, for it can bring doom to the islands." With that, he presents a spear made of sharpened bone and engraved with arcane runes. "This will make the dead rest, but its magic can be used only once." The weapon is a *spear vs. undead*. It causes 1d6+2 hp damage against any type of undead, double damage against the undead dragon slayer (see area 11), and triple damage against Infernis. After it successfully hits an undead target, the spear shatters and its magic is lost.

C. Jungle Giants. A small community of jungle giants lives in Silver Island's tropical forest. These giants do not go near the mountains, the vassal communities, or the well-traveled paths between them. However, they consider the rest of the island their hunting grounds. Agoron and Larala may meet 1-3 of these giants while traveling through the shaded area marked C on the map. While the PCs are in this area, roll 1d6 every turn. On a roll of 1 or 2, the heroes meet a jungle giant hunting party. On a roll of 6, the PCs encounter a pair of wyverns. In this case, go to area D.

If the PCs are flying, the giants try to attract their attention by firing giant-sized arrows across their path. If the dragon and kindred are traveling through the jungle, the giants stalk them for a while before making their presence known. Agoron can spot the giants with a dragon senses check at +15%.

Agoron and Larala might mistake the giants' actions as attacks and respond in kind. If so, the giants will defend themselves before fleeing into the jungle. If the pair do not attack, the giants provide some information about the jungle ahead. "Evil walks the jungle this day," the jungle giants explain. "Dead things march toward the hill of silver." The giants do not normally acknowledge the rulership of the silver dragons, but they believe this danger can be handled by only the powerful dragons. If Agoron is friendly, they tell him that they spotted monster zombies and bugbears heading toward a place they call "the hill of silver." They seem genuinely frightened by this and gladly direct Agoron to the hill. The path they point out passes right by a wyvern lair (area D). Under no circumstances will the giants accompany Agoron.

The jungle giant village is home to a dozen adult males, an equal number of females, and six children of various ages. If the PCs approach the village, the giants cautiously welcome them and pass on the information above.

Jungle giants (1-3): INT average; AL N; AC 3; MV 15, climb 6; HD 11; hp 62, 44, 33; THAC0 9; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 2d8 (tree-trunk club) or 2d6/2d6 (arrows); SA surprise (+1 penalty to foes); +9 to damage rolls; poisoned arrows (save vs. paralyzation at +2 or be rendered immobile for 2d6 turns); SZ H (18′ tall); ML 16; XP 6,000 each; MM/142.

D. Wyverns. A flight of wyverns makes its lair here. While the PCs are traveling through areas B and C, or through the jungle between them, a pair of wyverns spots the heroes (on a roll of 6 on 1d6). These huge flying reptiles have been disturbed by the black dragons. In their anger and confusion, the wyverns attack the first creatures to wander across their path. In the air, they streak toward Agoron and attack by bursting unexpectedly from the jungle canopy (+2 surprise bonus). On the ground, they swoop down to snatch Larala before Agoron can react.

If the PCs actually discover their lair, the wyverns attack upon returning. The lair is a large cave hidden in a thick grove of jungle plants. The cave descends into an underground cavern 50′ square. In the lair, Agoron and Larala can find two unhatched eggs and treasure worth 3,000 gp.

Wyverns (2): INT low; AL N(E); AC 3; MV 6, fly 24 (E); HD 7+7; hp 41, 33; THAC0 13; #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 1d6/1d6 (talons) or 2d8 (bite); SA stinger (1d6 hp damage); poison (save vs. poison or die); snatch (one talon hit to snatch man-sized creatures, two to snatch large-sized creatures); sting and bite snatched creatures each round with a +4 attack bonus; SZ G (35′ long); ML 14; XP 1,400 each; MM/366.

E. Trolls. For additional defense, Infernis has recruited a pack of trolls. Their respect and fear for the powerful undead dragon has made them eager to please Infernis. They patrol the jungle between the mountains and Cloudwalker Hill, searching for anyone who could cause problems for their new master. One of the trolls carries a two-handed

sword. The rest battle with their natural weapons (clawed hands and teeth). They battle to the death, for Infernis has promised to revive them should they fall in his service. This is a lie, but the trolls believe it completely.

The trolls encounter the PCs just before the heroes enter the shaded area around Cloudwalker Hill. If they can't get at the PCs because Agoron is flying, they wait for the first opportunity to attack (certainly when the PCs finally land before the hill).

If Agoron and Larala somehow find the trolls' lair, it is empty. The trolls are busy watching for threats to their new master along the path from the mountains. The lair is a foul, smelly hole in the middle of a jungle grove. From the outside, it looks like some huge nest. Inside, it contains the remains of many troll meals and a scattering of treasure worth 1,500 gp.

Trolls (5): INT low; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 43, 39, 37, 35, 28; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4+4/1d4+4/1d8+4 (claw/claw/bite); SA leader attacks with two-handed sword (2d4+8/2d8+8); SD regeneration; SZ L (9' tall); ML 14; XP 1,400 each; MM/349.

F. Black Dragons. Three black dragons patrol an area approximately 10 miles around the site of Cloudwalker Hill. Infernis, through Lord Deathstream, has ordered the dragons to keep any and all creatures from reaching the hill. Enthusiastic and eager to please their lord, the dragons do their best to comply with these instructions. Shortly after Agoron and Larala enter the shaded area labeled A on the map, the dragons attack from ambush.

If the PCs are unaware of the black dragons, the blacks receive a +6 surprise bonus. If the heroes were warned by either the lizard man patrol or the lizard man village (see area B), the bonus is reduced to +4 or +2 respectively.

The dragons attack one at a time from hiding, each using its breath weapon in a different round. If two of the dragons fall, the third attempts to escape. If captured and questioned, the blacks will say only that they are following the orders of their dragon lord, Deathstream of Clan Blackmoon. They do not know about their clan's connection to Infernis.

Juvenile black dragons (3): INT average; AL CE; AC 1; MV 12, fly 30 (C), swim 12; HD 12; hp 67, 59, 51; THAC0 9; #AT 3 plus special; Dmg 1d6/1d6/3d6 (claw/claw/bite); SA +4 damage to all physical attacks, acid stream breath weapon once every three combat rounds (Dmg 8d4+4); SD immune to acid; SZ G (26' body, 22' tail); ML 16; XP 10,000 each; MM/65.

Saving throws: DM 8, RSW 10, PP 9, BW 9, Sp 11.

Special abilities: magical abilities at 9th level.

Innate abilities: *water breathing*, *darkness* three times per day, 40' radius.

Wizard spells (one spell per dragon): *magic missile*, *shocking grasp*, *wall of fog*.

After the fight with the black dragons, Agoron and Larala experience another dream vision. This dream, however, happens while they are awake. If Agoron is flying when the dream occurs, he glides for the duration of the vision.

A swirling cloud of silver mist opens before you, revealing a large hill. You watch, and the hill rises and shifts, taking on the form of a great silver dragon. Its pained, tired face turns toward you, and you hear the haunting dream voice that has filled your sleep these many nights past.

"Agoron, my child," the dragon calls. "Where are you? I need your help. Infernis draws closer, and already his foul servants have entered my hidden caverns. They seek the talon. You must find it first, or at least keep them from returning it to Infernis. Hurry, my child. You are the only hope for the clans."

The swirling mist draws back on itself, closing off the vision of the hill-turned-dragon. Time is running out, and the PCs must hurry.

Cloudwalker Hill

When the PCs finish battling the black dragons, they spot something huge circling the raised treetops that mark the location of Cloudwalker Hill. If the heroes stay in the air, the flying creature will notice them, and it looks large enough to give Agoron a real problem. The best course is to land and push on through the undergrowth, using the dense jungle to hide their approach to the hill. Of course, this is also just what Infernis expects his enemies to do.

Anticipating that the sleeping dragon would call for help as it awakened, Infernis has placed a variety of undead creatures one mile from the hill. He needs to slow down any help only long enough for his forces to find the *talon of final destruction*. As soon as Agoron and Larala land, the ground around them explodes and an army of undead rises up to attack.

You step into the jungle, sure that the hill must be close, when the ground beneath you starts to shake. Dirt and rocks fly into the air as skeletal limbs reach up like fast-growing, hideous plants. You remember your dream vision as zombies and skeletons reach for you. These undead creatures surround you, tear at you, claw at you. And overhead, something large and fast passes above the jungle canopy.

The undead can only hinder and delay Agoron, though their numbers could cause some damage. After two rounds of battle, Jerverdi the green dragon appears. She moves to help Agoron and Larala in their fight, and with her aid the battle ends quickly.

Because she has been following them since Cloud City, Jerverdi has learned much of what the pair knows. She explains that she heard the same call for help as they did, though this is untrue. She just wants to learn more for her dragon lord. If she really understood the danger before them, she would not have followed. However, she volunteers to help and refuses to take no for an answer.

Skeleton, monster (6): INT non; AL N; AC 6; MV 12; HD 6; hp 42, 39, 34, 30, 27, 21; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8/1d12 (long sword); SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *fear*, and *hold* spells; immune to cold-based attacks; half damage from edged or piercing weapons; SZ H (9′ tall); ML special; XP 650 each; MM/315.

Skeleton, giant (4): INT non; AL N; AC 4; MV 12; HD 4+4; hp 32, 29, 27, 24; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d12 (spear); SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *fear*, and *hold* spells; immune to cold-based attacks; half damage from edged or piercing weapons; SZ L (12′ tall); ML 20; XP 975 each; MM/316.

Zombies (12): INT non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 2; hp 14 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, death magic, poisons, and *cold*-based spells; SZ M (6′ tall); ML special; XP 65 each; MM/373.

The trek through the jungle ends when the hill from Agoron's dreams comes into sight.

You push through the heavy jungle brush and there it is: a hill of pleasing shape and natural beauty, surrounded by a fine silver mist. A wound mars the otherwise perfect surface of the hill. Someone or something has opened a hole into the mound, digging a path into its side. The small cave-like opening is too small for a full-size dragon to enter, but Larala, or Agoron in elf form, should have no problem.

Before the adventurers can decide what to do, Infernis attacks.

Dracolich Strike

Infernis dives through the jungle canopy, barely revealing himself to Agoron and company. They hear a swift wind, the cracking of branches, and the belch of dragon fire. The first pass drenches Jerverdi in a shower of flame. Before the PCs' eyes, the green dragon is consumed and destroyed. This serves as both a warning and a motivation. To stay outside is extremely dangerous, but the cave offers some hope of protection.

The PCs are not meant to battle Infernis at this point in the adventure. (They're not supposed to fight him at all, but that's another matter.) If they decide to stay outside and fight, let the battle proceed as it will. (Infernis's statistics are given on page 64.) Every few rounds, Kagil sends visions calling for help against "the invaders inside me." If this doesn't get the PCs into the cave, let the adventure conclude here at the claws of the dracolich.

If the heroes enter the cave, continue with the rest of this section.

Into the Hill

The interior of the hill is very different from the exterior. For one thing, though the walls are dirt and stone and growing roots, the interior looks a lot like the inside of a living, organic being (in this case, a dragon). Each chamber was formed from Kagil's body, though it has become an actual part of the landscape. A strange undercurrent of fear and anxiety echoes in the caves as Kagil comes closer to fully waking.

A troop of bugbears works directly for Infernis, whom these creatures view as a deity. Four teams of four bugbears each (16 in all) operate in the caves beneath the hill. The bugbears are well trained and fight intelligently, seeking to weaken their opponents while taking as little damage themselves as possible. They do this by striking from hiding, setting ambushes, and firing ranged weapons first. Because of their faith in Infernis, these bugbears have unusually high morale. If forced to break and run, they attempt to assemble elsewhere in the caves to make another attack. Their orders are to find the *talon of final destruction* and bring it to Infernis.

Bugbears (16): INT average; AL CE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 3+1; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10/3d6 (two-handed sword) or 1d4+1/1d6+1 (sling bullet); SA surprise (+3 penalty to foes); +2 to damage rolls; SZ L (7′ tall); ML 14; XP 120 each; MM/32. Hit points are listed

where the bugbears are encountered.

Monster zombies, created from the dead bodies of bugbears and ogres, also serve the dracolich. Eight of them have been placed to guard the caves while the bugbears search for the hidden treasure hoard. The zombies will not leave the areas they have been ordered to protect, but they attack any beings not loyal to Infernis who linger in or pass through the chambers they guard. The monster zombies' hit points area listed where the creatures are met.

Monster zombies (8): INT non; AL N; AC 6; MV 9; HD 6; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 4d4; SD immune to *sleep, charm, hold,* death magic, cold-based spells, and poisons; SZ L; ML 15; XP 650 each; MM/373.

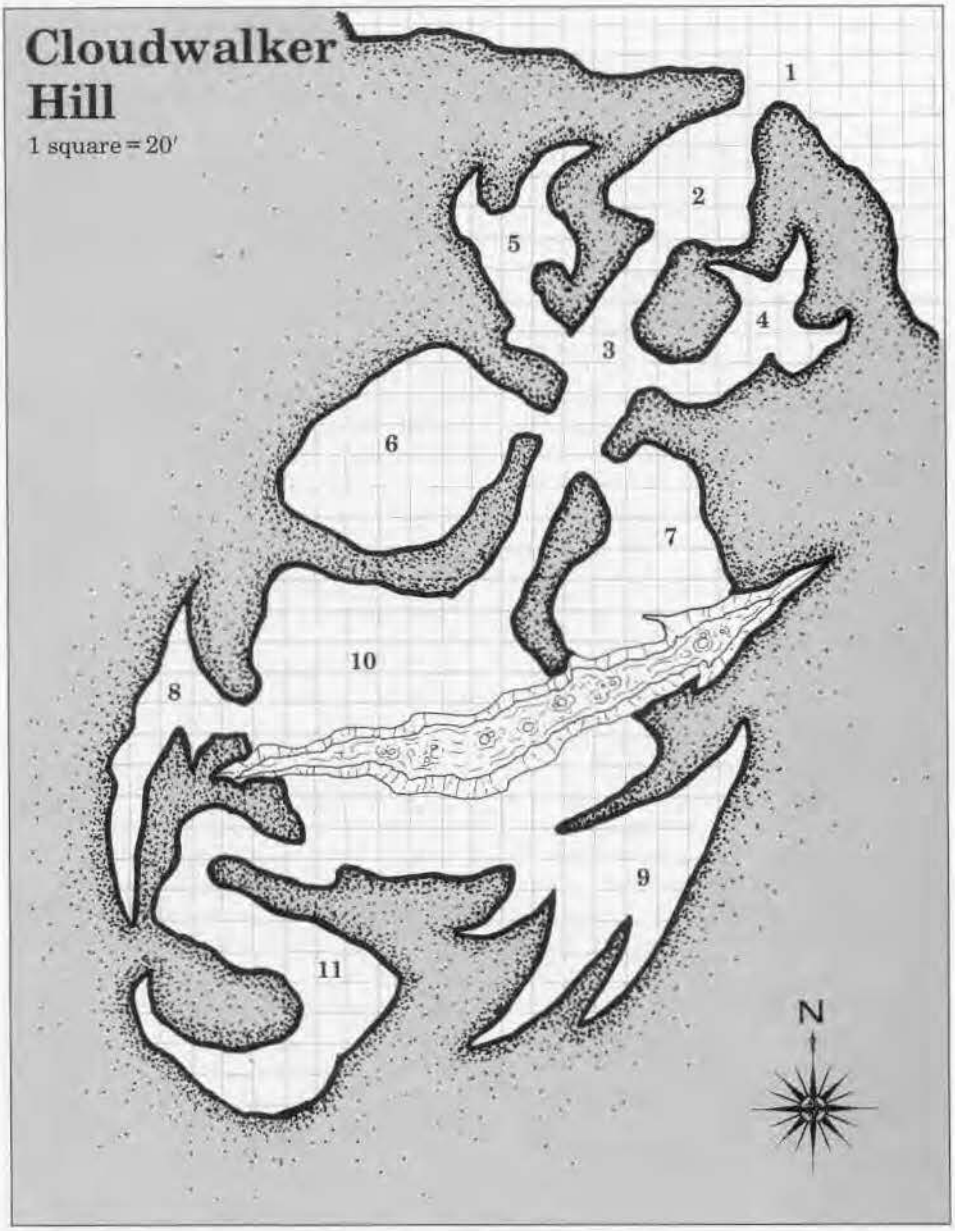
1. Entrance. The dracolich attacks the PCs and destroys the green dragon here. The hole in the side of the hill appears dark and jagged, as though it was gouged out with sharp claws. The opening is barely 6′ tall and 3′ wide.

2. Monster Zombies. This chamber, shaped like the inside of a dragon's skull, has walls of pale white stone. Sharp columns formed from Kagil's jagged teeth line the curved walls, growing down from the ceiling and jutting up from the moist, muddy floor. A number of these columns have been broken away to allow entry into the chamber. Their smashed pieces litter the floor.

Two **monster zombies** (hp 30, 27) guard this chamber. They move to attack as soon as anyone enters through the cave opening. The zombies battle to the death but will not leave this chamber for any reason.

3. Monster Zombies. This long corridor of circular ribs of white stone appears organic in nature. PCs in this tunnel should get the distinct impression that they are walking through the center of a giant rib cage. Water drips from the moist ceiling to puddle in the spaces between the floor ridges. Openings lead off each side of the corridor, and strange sounds echo from all directions. Some of the sounds might be voices or footsteps, but there is an underlying pulse that gets louder and more persistent the deeper into the hill the PCs travel.

Two **monster zombies** (hp 35, 25) guard this corridor. They wait until the PCs pass by the side tunnels where they hide, then emerge and strike from both sides.



4. Empty Chamber. A short corridor of crumbling, striated soil leads to this three-pronged chamber. The walls here seem to consist of pale stone streaked with veins of glittering silver. Ridges in the walls, floor, and ceiling give the impression of freshly cleaned bone. The place is deserted, though there is evidence that this chamber has been searched recently. Large gouts of rock and soil have been dug out of the floor and walls, and a few chunks of raw silver (worth a total of 3,000 gold pieces) lie scattered about.

5. Bugbear Team. Agoron and Larala meet the first team of bugbears in this clawlike chamber. It resembles area 4, except the **bugbears** (hp 20, 14, 13, 8) are still here, breaking open sections of the wall.

6. Large Chamber. A layer of stagnant water coats the floor of this large chamber. The air is cool and damp, and moist dirt clings to the walls and ceil-

ing. A steady breeze whispers through this area, and the mud on the walls bubbles as it contracts and expands to some unknown beat.

A team of **bugbears** (hp 16, 13 (×2), 10) searches through a mound of treasure that juts from the water's surface. A **monster zombie** (hp 35) stands nearby, providing additional support should the bugbears need it. Gems and chunks of precious metal make up the bulk of the treasure, though a magical item or two may be included if the PCs need extra help. The *talon* is not here, however. Because the treasure belongs to the sleeping dragon, neither Agoron nor Larala should be tempted to take any of it. They can gather as much as 15,000 gp worth from this location if they so choose, however.

7. Broken Chamber. Shaped much like area 6, this area is as hot and steamy as the other is damp and cool. The dirt on the walls has become dry and brittle from the heat, and the farther in the PCs go, the more uncomfortable the area becomes. A gaping crack splits the far end of the cave. The crack drops over 100′ into a bubbling lake of molten lava. The lava belongs to the same stream that feeds most of the volcanoes of the southern islands (including the Silver Mountains). The crack was caused by one of the frequent earthquakes that have rocked the island over the centuries since Kagil became a guardian of the land.

One **monster zombie** (hp 32) hides along the wall of the chamber near the crack. Make a dragon senses check at 65% for Agoron. If Agoron succeeds, he spots the undead creature. Otherwise, when one of the heroes gets close to the cracked ground, the monster zombie stumbles out and forces the PC over the edge with a successful attack roll. Falling into the boiling lava means instant death for either Agoron or Larala, though they can make Dexterity checks to save themselves by catching an outcropping.

8. Side Chamber. This narrow chamber of pale silver stone is inlaid with a disturbing pattern of thin, pulsing-red veins. It should remind the PCs of a dragon's membranous wings—from the inside looking out.

A team of four **bugbears** (hp 23, 20, 17, 16) and a **monster zombie** (hp 32) searches this chamber. If they are not discovered, they emerge into area 10 for "The Final Battle."

9. Side Chamber. This chamber looks much like area 8. The last **bugbear team** (hp 19, 18, 14, 13) searches here for the *talon*. A scattering of treasure (worth 7,000 gp) fills part of the chamber, but the magical item that Infernis craves is not here. If the bugbears are not dealt with here, they move to area 10 to join in the final battle.

10. Vast Chamber. This area was formed from Kagil's main body. The walls of the cave still pulse with ancient life, and the remains of his vital organs hang from the distant ceiling: a large heart beats steadily, a stomach churns, and other organs pulsate. One strange growth, covered with ice, hangs far from the oppressive heat that fills the chamber. The great crack that divides the chamber throws out fiery light and hot steam, and the sounds of hot, bubbling rock far below echo freely in the air.

This area is empty when the PCs first enter. In elf form, Agoron may have trouble crossing the cracked ground, though a rope has been set up for the bugbears in area 9 and the undead dragon slayer in area 11. The area is large enough for Agoron's dragon form, though flying will be nearly impossible. The final battle occurs here, after the PCs have fought the slayer.

11. Tail Chamber. This twisting cave holds the bulk of Kagil's surviving treasure hoard, including the *talon of final destruction*. An undead dragon slayer and the last of the **monster zombies** (hp 21) lurk here. The PCs arrive just as the slayer has uncovered the *talon*. His hatred of dragons (other than Infernis) extends to Agoron, and he leaps to destroy the polymorphed elf as soon as the dragon's true form is revealed. The slayer will not immediately attack the PCs unless they threaten him, reveal Agoron's true identity, or attempt to take the *talon*.

Infernis raised the dragon slayer Marcub Bladesong as an undead creature. This slayer retains most of his memories, and the skills that made him dangerous when he was alive, with the added powers of the undead to bolster his formidable abilities. Infernis has convinced Marcub that any dracolich is an avatar of Io, the dragon god worshiped by the human slayers. Each slayer knows that he serves as an instrument of Great Io's judgment, and carries the ancient commandment in his heart: destroy the unworthy dragons of the Io's Blood islands.

Although Io used the humans to force the dragons to work together, the dragon god never counted the humans among his followers. The human dragon slayers, however, have taken Io's words and turned them into a doctrine of faith.

Marcub believes that Great Io has a special purpose for him. That's why Io sent Infernis, who is as undead as the slayer, to lead him against the dragons. For Marcub Bladesong, the holy war continues.

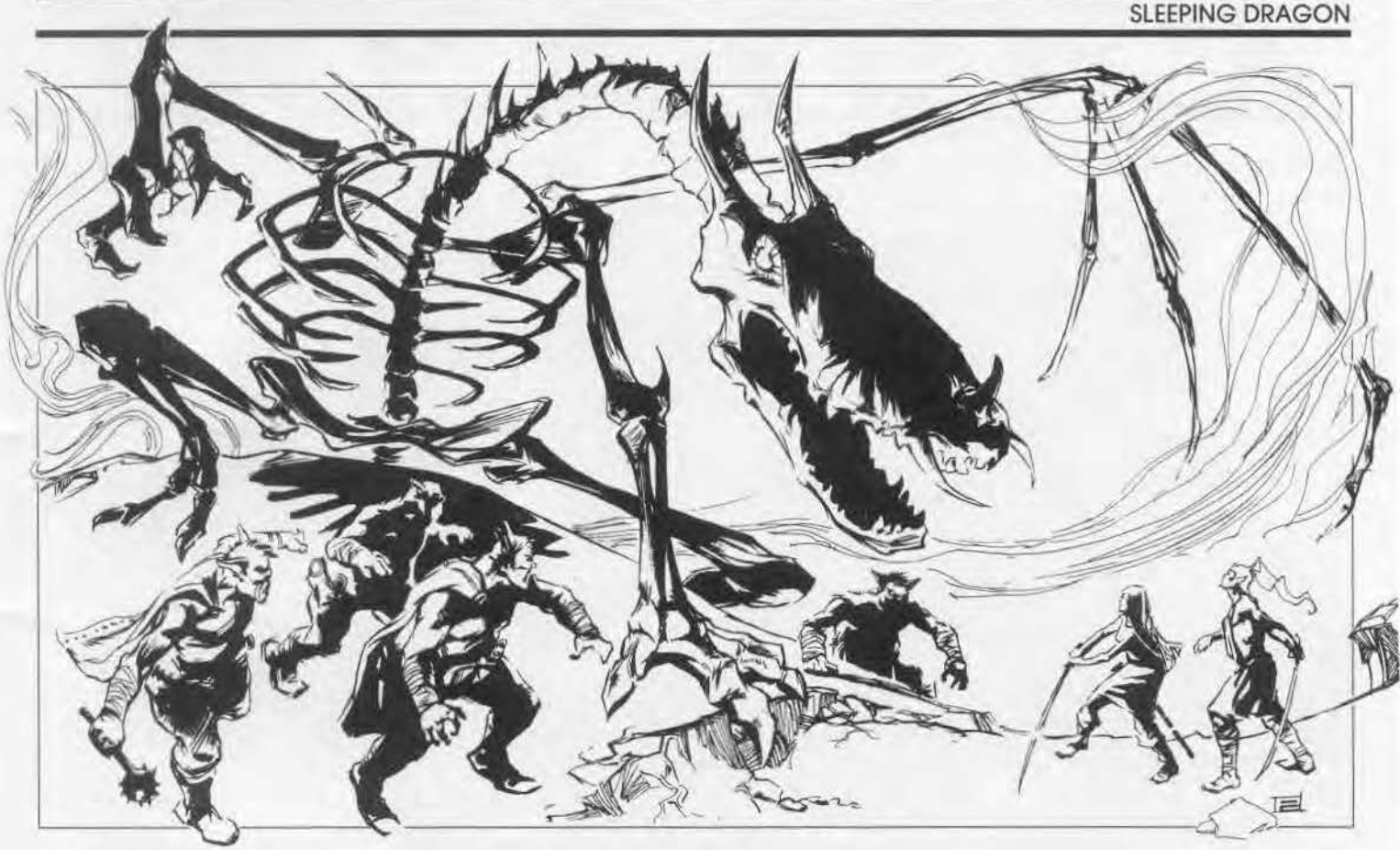
Agoron and Larala can easily spot the *talon*, as the slayer has strapped it to his back. If Agoron wants to make full use of his dragon abilities to battle the slayer, he must return to area 9 (which is large enough to hold his true form). When Agoron does this, go to "The Final Battle."

Marcub Bladesong, undead dragon slayer: INT genius; AL CE; AC 0 (−1 vs. dragons); MV 12; HD 9; hp 63; THAC0 11; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8+2/1d12+2 (*long sword +2, dragon slayer*); SA +3 to attack, +6 damage against nondragons; +5 to attack rolls vs. dragons, +15 damage bonus vs. dragons; SD immune to dragon fear; no damage if save vs. breath weapon successful, half damage otherwise; immune to clerical turning; SZ M (6′ tall); ML 19; XP 7,000; DRAGON® Magazine #205.

Special abilities: breath stun (+4 penalty to attack rolls, success disables a dragon's breath weapon for a number of rounds equal to the damage caused by the attack); dodge attack (+2 to attack roll; +4 to AC against dragon physical attacks, +2 to saving throws against breath weapons, on successful Dexterity check); great blow (additional damage inflicted up to slayer's remaining hit points; slayer loses these hit points regardless of whether blow succeeds); weapon throw (toss primary weapon at flying dragon); breach attack (+6 bonus to attack roll on successful Intelligence check, +2 bonus if check fails).

The Final Battle

The final battle takes place in area 10, after the PCs meet the undead dragon slayer. The battle could include some or



all of the following opponents: the slayer and a monster zombie from area 11, four bugbears and a monster zombie from area 8, four bugbears from area 9.

Agoron and Larala must defeat the dragon slayer to claim the *talon of final destruction*. During the battle, Kagil's voice echoes from the very walls of the cave. "You must destroy the talon of final destruction before it falls into Infernis's possession," Kagil implores them. "It has taken many dragon ages, but I believe I know how this can be done. In fire hot enough to melt the land itself, the talon will be destroyed!"

The pool of lava provides just such heat, though it may take the PCs a moment to come to this conclusion. Before the heroes can act, however, they hear another voice fill the room. It is an evil, malicious voice, and it rises from the great crack like so much scalding steam. Infernis has found a path into the hill. Two miles north of Cloudwalker Hill, the dracolich discovered a cave system with openings to a vast underground lake of lava. Infernis, who still has his red dragon immunities, is not bothered by the heat at all.

"Give me the talon, descendant of Cloudwalker," Infernis demands as he climbs the broken ground. "I created it long ago, and I want it back. Defy me and you will not receive the mercy of a swift death."

If the PCs have not yet used the *spear vs. undead* (see area B) that the lizard man shaman gave them, this is as good a time as any. A successful attack while Infernis is climbing will knock the dracolich into the boiling lava, delaying him for three rounds. Other attacks, if strong enough, may do the same thing. Any single attack that does more than 20 hp damage will force Infernis back for one round. This includes spells, single physical attacks, and breath weapons.

When the *talon* is tossed into the lava, it explodes in flame and disappears beneath the bubbling surface. Infernis screams in rage and prepares to punish Agoron and his kindred. However, at this moment the sleeping dragon comes fully awake. The hill shakes and a strong, benevolent presence fills the air.

> "It is over, Infernis," Kagil's voice thunders through the hill. "You have no business here. I am awake now, and my powers are greater than your own. Leave now and trouble the living no more."
>
> Infernis retreats to the great crack, but he pauses long enough to look address the silver dragon who caused his latest plan to fail. "I will remember this, descendant of Cloudwalker," the dracolich sneers. "There will be a reckoning!"
>
> "Enough!" Kagil roars. "Begone, dracolich! Begone before you follow the talon into oblivion!" Ice begins to spread along the ceiling of the cave and down the walls as Kagil gathers his powers of cold to rage against the dracolich. A bolt of absolute cold assaults the undead creature, shattering one claw with a frigid blast.
>
> The dracolich screams, then shouts, "Another time, Kagil, you can be sure!" With that, Infernis disappears back the way he came, and peace once again settles over the lair of the guardian of the land.

Fully awake, Kagil has powers and abilities far beyond even the most

Continued on page 72

Dungeon®

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HONOR LOST, HONOR REGAINED

BY PAUL HAMILTON BEATTIE JR.

Fallen from grace, fallen into despair

Artwork by Tony DiTerlizzi

Paul writes: "My life the past few years has been a whirl. After graduating from the University of Chicago in 1986, I spent a year in Europe, another doing graduate work in immunology, and two more in the Marine Corps. After surviving that, I went on to law school at the University of Michigan and graduated last May.

"Since high school, I have played role-playing games intermittently, as a welcome relief from the sterile rigors of modern professionalism. More recently, I resolved to combine my interests in writing and fantasy gaming by making my own modest contributions to TSR's creative exploits."

"Honor Lost, Honor Regained" is an AD&D® adventure for 3-5 player characters of 4th-6th level (18-20 total levels). The party should include a priest and at least one warrior. Because the principal NPC is a fallen paladin of Helm, no PC should be overtly evil. The adventure works best if a party priest also worships Helm, but a lawful-neutral or lawful-good priest of any order will do. Although this adventure is set in the Forgotten Realms, it can be easily adapted to any campaign.

For the Dungeon Master

Edgar grew up in Tilverton, the son of a soldier. His father died in battle when he was young, and his mother—a resourceful woman—found him a position in Helm's Shrine as a servant. In time, Edgar grew strong and capable, and the abbot trained him as a paladin. Confident and dauntless, Edgar crusaded in Helm's name, winning praise from Tilverton's beleaguered citizens.

There was, however, one thing that truly frightened Edgar. In his youth, while exploring the sewers beneath Tilverton, he became helplessly trapped in the web of a giant spider. As the horrid monster approached, Edgar could do nothing; his sword arm was caught in its webs. The spider crawled up to him, ogling him with its beady, black eyes. For many long minutes it gloated over Edgar, its mandibles gnashing inches from his face.

Edgar was rescued by his companions that day, but he was deeply traumatized. He continued to dream of the horrible creature: its hairy, bloated body, its beady eyes, its gibbering mouth. Edgar had developed an uncon-

trollable fear of spiders.

With the advent of Cormyrean occupation, the task of guarding Tilverton fell to the Purple Dragons. Additionally, the Time of Troubles lowered Helm's standing in most northern towns. Feeling that it was a good time to see the world, Edgar traveled west in search of adventure, accompanied by his trusted friend Father Darvin, a priest of Torm. Months later, they came upon a deserted halfling village in the Far Hills. Nearby, they found a dark cave.

The cave had recently been occupied by a baleful drider named Karinza. Scorned by the drow for failing the rite of passage of the drow's dark goddess, the hideously transformed Karinza fled her subterranean home beneath the Far Hills. She and her retinue of adoring spiders took up residence in the dank cave. An unsuspecting halfling village nearby provided an abundant food source until, after weeks of Karinza's predation, the surviving halflings fled into the hills.

When Edgar and Darvin investigated the cavern, they were ambushed by Karinza's giant spiders. Father Darvin became entangled in sticky spider webs and immobilized before he could cast any spells. Edgar fought on valiantly for a time, until—overcome by his irrational fear of spiders—he dishonorably fled the cave, leaving his friend to die in agony, and losing the favor of his patron god. For over an hour Edgar ran in terror, finally collapsing in exhaustion on a small mountain trail.

For the Player Characters

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> You have been traveling all day along narrow mountain trails. Late in the afternoon, you came across a recently deserted halfling village but were unable to discover why it had been abandoned. Evening is approaching. As the shadows lengthen and the air cools, you begin to look for a campsite.
>
> Off to the side of the trail, you see something lying in the dirt. It appears to be a fully armored man lying face down in the dust. As you get closer, you think you hear sobbing.
>
> At your approach, the man looks up, tears running down his dusty face. He glares at you and gropes in the dirt for his weapon. Brandishing a morning star, he leaps to his feet, a guilty look on his tired face.
>
> "Will you sneak up like thieves on a servant of Helm, taking advantage of my prostration and misery to rob me? You will not find me easy prey, for though I am unworthy of Helm, still I can give my life to rid the land of lawlessness and evil."

If the PCs insist that they mean him no harm, Edgar concentrates for a few moments on several of the adventurers, then shakes his head sadly.

> "Just as I suspected," he groans. "My dishonor has cost me Helm's blessing. I can no longer sense evil intentions. I must judge you by your actions.
>
> "Let one of you step forward, and we will test each other's mettle. In battle, a man can judge another's true worthiness. If we strike with the flats of our blades, like squires at play, we can judge each other without much loss of blood."
>
> With that, Edgar slips his morning star into his belt and draws his long sword.

Edgar, fallen paladin of Helm: AL LG; AC 0; MV 6; F6; hp 43; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16 (0, +1), D 15, C 15, I 11, W 13, Ch 17; ML 14; plate mail, *medium shield +1, morning star +1*, long sword, hand axe, potion of *healing*. Specialized in weapon and shield fighting style (optional rule from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*).

Edgar is 5'11" tall, with a medium build, short brown hair, and well-trimmed beard and mustache.

Nonweapon proficiencies: healing (11), horse riding (16), etiquette (17), heraldry (11), religion (13)

Edgar has lost all his paladin abilities and is too ashamed to pray to Helm for forgiveness. He must make a morale check at the beginning of every round in which he faces giant spiders (or driders), or flee in terror. A *remove fear* spell allows Edgar to function normally in the presence of giant spiders for up to one turn. A *bless* spell gives him a +1 bonus to his morale checks. The DM should decide the effects of other magical efforts to bolster Edgar's morale.

If no one in the party steps forward to accept Edgar's challenge, he concludes they lack honor and parts company with them.

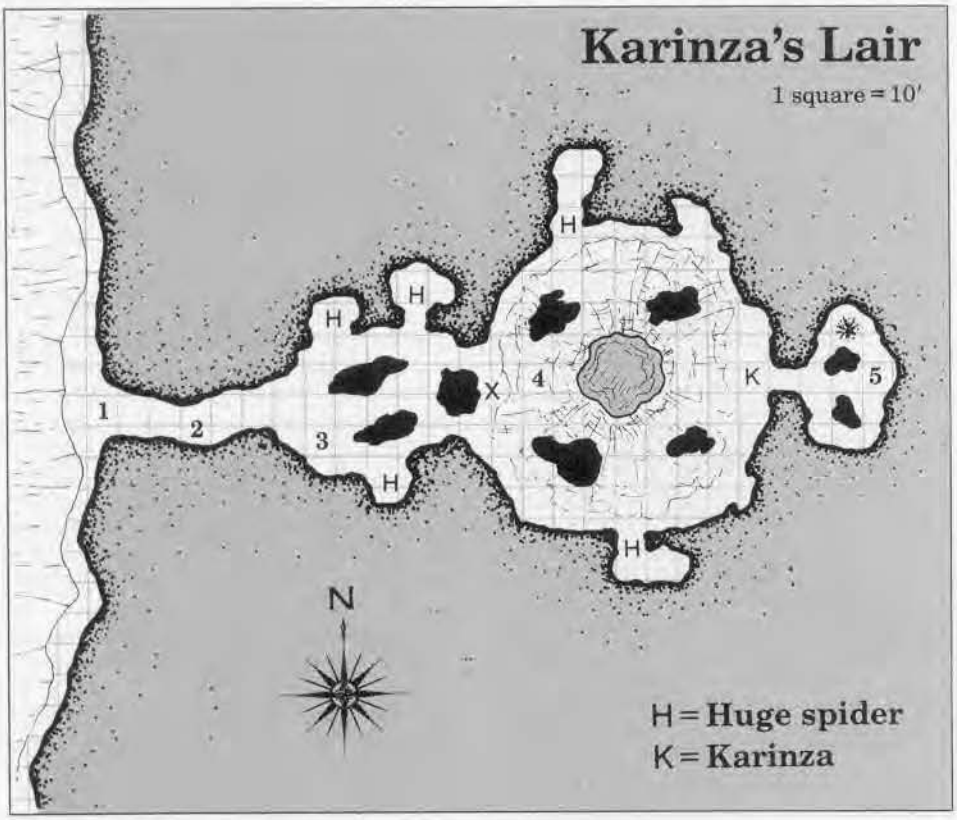
If someone agrees to fight Edgar, he will scrupulously follow the rules. (The rules for nonlethal weapon combat are on page 98 of the *Player's Handbook*.) Edgar's opponent can attempt to cheat by swinging harder than agreed. A PC who cheats recovers as much of the penalty for nonlethal combat as he wants. Standard nonlethal combat damage is half damage with a −4 penalty to the attack roll. An attack roll with a −3 penalty hits for 5/8 damage; a −2 penalty roll strikes for 3/4 damage; an attack roll with only a −1 penalty does 7/8 damage. All damage is permanent when the PC swings with less than a −3 penalty. The PC can, of course, swing normally with no penalty. However, whenever his opponent cheats, Edgar makes a Wisdom check with a bonus equal to the amount of the attack roll penalty recovered by the cheater.

If Edgar catches his opponent cheating, he denounces the "villain" and begins fighting normally until one of them is knocked unconscious or killed. After this, he will probably have nothing more to do with the party.

If his opponent is honorable, Edgar acknowledges his worth after a few well-fought rounds. The former paladin uses his healing proficiency to cure any wounds he has inflicted, and he asks permission to camp with the party.

As soon as the group makes camp, Edgar approaches the priest who seems most sympathetic to his beliefs (a priest of Helm or one of lawful-good or lawful-neutral alignment) and asks to make a private confession. With a look of utter shame, Edgar tells the priest the story of his disgrace and asks him to prepare a prayer seeking Helm's guidance. The DM should take the player running the priest aside to hear Edgar's confession.

The person playing the priest has several great opportunities for role-playing. First, the player should actually compose a short prayer, asking Helm to forgive Edgar and seeking a sign showing how Edgar can redeem himself. The priest must hold a lengthy prayer vigil (6 hours or more) to intercede with Helm on Edgar's behalf. If the prayer is well written, the DM should award 200 XP for the prayer. Second, the priest should inform the party of Edgar's dilemma while protecting Edgar from further embarrassment or shame. Sensitivity to Edgar's honor should gain the priest an additional 300 XP.



If the DM likes the prayer, Helm sends an omen to the party in the morning. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> In the early morning, you awaken to the sound of birds screeching. Looking up, you see a lone sparrow attacking a flock of large black crows. One of the crows grasps a limp sparrow in its talons, and the lone sparrow is attempting to rescue its fellow. The crows chase the sparrow off, and it retreats to the protective cover of a nearby tree. Soon the lone sparrow is joined by several more sparrows, and together they attack the crows, forcing them to drop the limp sparrow, which falls to the ground lifeless. The sparrows alight around their fallen friend and, after a moment of silence, fly away.

Edgar asks the PC cleric to interpret the omen. If none of the PCs grasp the meaning of this event, Edgar suggests that Helm wants the party to help him rescue Darvin's body from the giant spiders. If the party declines to help Edgar, he remains behind despite his terror, to make an ill-fated foray against the spiders. Each member of the party incurs a minor *curse*: all PCs strike at −1 until they make a donation at a temple to Helm or a *remove curse* spell is cast. The DM may also penalize clerics or paladins with the temporary loss of spellcasting or other abilities.

If the party agrees to help Edgar, the paladin suggests that they fully recover before approaching the cavern. He asks party clerics to pray for spells that will counteract his irrational fear of spiders. If the DM chooses, a few huge spiders may attack the party during the night.

Karinza's Lair

If the PCs agree to help Edgar, he leads them along narrow mountain trails for several hours. The footing is treacherous, but the party arrives at the mouth of the cave without event.

1. Cave Entrance.

> The mouth of the cave is set in the side of a small cliff. A narrow path winds its way along the cliff face, passing the mouth of the cave and curving out of sight. At the outer edge of the path there is a steep, rocky decline.

Anyone who falls off the path takes 3d6 hp damage and faces a long and arduous climb back up. The moist air that billows out of the cave mouth reeks of carrion. Unidentifiable bones litter the tunnel beyond. Edgar turns pale and mutters something about spiders. "It happened right inside the entrance," is all he can manage to say.

2. Black Widows. Large black widow spiders wait to drop on unsuspecting victims who travel down this rough passage. Careful examination of the ceiling 15' above reveals large black spiders scurrying about in their webs. The spiders drop onto the party if it enters the passage. If any PCs linger near the mouth of the cave, the spiders drop in front of the party and attack.

Spiders, large black widows (5): INT non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6, web 15; HD 2; hp 15, 13, 11, 10 (×2); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA poison (save at −2, type B, Dmg 20/1-3, onset 2-12 minutes); SZ S (3' diameter); ML 11; XP 175; MM/326 (modified).

Because of Edgar's warning, the party is not surprised. Sounds of combat here, however, alert Karinza to the party's presence. (See area 4, "Karinza's Actions.")

3. First Cavern.

> Fifteen feet above you, stalactites jut from the roof of this cave like teeth from a monster's maw. Stalagmites thrust upward from the floor, sometimes joining the stalactites to form smooth, hourglass-shaped stone pillars. The cavern floor is uneven, making movement difficult. Bones are scattered about, and thick spider webs, glistening with moisture, droop from the ceiling and between the pillars. A dingy gray light filters through from the east.

The scattered bones are mostly from small demihuman creatures, probably halflings. Combat in this room is hampered by the uneven footing and the thick spider webs (if the party does not burn them). Each PC moves at half the normal Movement Rates and incurs a −1 attack roll penalty and a +1 penalty

to initiative rolls because of uncertain footing. These penalties do not apply to missile attacks. Additionally, PCs in melee must make Dexterity checks (with a +2 bonus) each round to avoid getting stuck in spider webs for one round, thereby losing their actions. Anyone who gets stuck in a web (fails a Dexterity check) must make a saving throw vs. wands to avoid becoming utterly entangled. For the consequences of entanglement, see page 326 of the *Monstrous Manual*.

Three **large black widow spiders** (hp 14, 9, 7; see area 2 for statistics) hide in their webs at the back of the cavern, 80% undetectable without very bright light. The spiders wait until the party enters the cavern, then quickly move along their webs, falling upon the party with a −2 to penalty to the party's surprise roll. If the party burns the webs, the black widows take 1-6 hp singe damage before dropping to the floor to attack.

Additionally, three huge stalking spiders wait to pounce on PCs who pass in front of their alcoves. The location of each huge spider is noted by an H on the map. These spiders can leap up to 30′ to attack their victims, imposing a −6 penalty to the PCs' surprise rolls. Anyone struck by a leaping spider must make a Dexterity check to avoid being knocked over. The spiders will leave their alcoves to pursue prey.

Spiders, huge (3): INT animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 18; HD 2+2; hp 16, 13, 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA poison (save at +1, type A, Dmg 15/0, onset 2-20 minutes); SZ M (6′ diameter); ML 8; XP 270; MM/326.

4. Great Cavern. Because of Karinza's actions (see next page), the party may not initially get a good description of this large cavern.

> The roof of this cavern is shrouded in darkness 20′ above. A precarious stone path follows the perimeter of the cavern. Inside this treacherous rim, the cavern floor declines steeply, forming a bowl with a little pool of murky water at the bottom.
>
> Stalagmites and jagged rocks protrude from the sloping cavern floor. In four places, great stalactites and stalagmites meet, forming thick pillars that seem to hold up the ancient ceiling. The sound of water dripping from the ceiling and striking the surface of the pool echoes through the cavern.
>
> A dull gray light emanates from the east face of a large pillar at the entrance to the cavern. The pitiful light faintly illuminates the wide ledge that narrows to form the stone perimeter path. The light comes from a small stone attached to the pillar by a sticky glob of spider web. To the east, across the vast depression, a flickering red glow barely reveals the entrance to another cavern.

A dingy drow version of a *continuous light* spell has been cast on the stone, which illuminates the landing with a dim, gray light. (The stone is indicated by an X on the map.) Karinza illuminated the stone so she could study her spellbooks and identify intruders more readily. (Karinza only needs light to read if the DM is using the optional infravision rule; see the *DMG*, page 119.)

Anyone falling off the path rolls down

the steep decline, taking 2d6 hp damage from the jagged rocks before coming to rest near the pool. PCs may move up the sides of the bowl at only 20' per round. Numerous bones are scattered around the pool, the products of Karinza's grisly meals.

A careful search of the depression reveals the corpse of Father Darvin. His swollen face peers vacantly from his battered helmet. His body lies crumpled at the bottom of the depression, partly immersed in the murky water and still clad in chain mail. Karinza is letting the body age a little before eating it.

If Darvin's body is found, Edgar mentions that Darvin always carried a magical mace. A PC who carefully searches through the murky water, which is no more than 3' deep, can recover Father Darvin's *footman's mace +1* and various other odds and ends improvised by the DM. A *detect magic* spell can help locate the mace.

Several small alcoves line the cavern, with access from the narrow path. In two of these alcoves, **huge spiders** (hp 12, 11; see area 3 for statistics) wait to pounce on any prey that walks by. Anyone struck by a spider leaping from an alcove must make a Dexterity check to avoid falling off the path and into the depression.

Karinza's Actions

The vile drider Karinza is languishing on the wide landing east of the depression when the party enters her lair. (Her initial location is indicated by the K on the map.) When she first hears the sounds of battle, she immediately casts a *clairvoyance* spell centered on the first cavern. She then watches the PCs to learn their capabilities.

When the party is on the verge of defeating the second group of giant black widow spiders, Karinza drops her *clairvoyance* spell and casts a *wall of fog* spell centered on the western landing of the great cavern. The whole area becomes obscured in a thick, moist fog that stretches from the eastern third of the first cavern to the western reaches of the depression. She then casts a *monster summoning II* spell, bringing five troglodytes to the western ledge of the great cavern.

Immediately smelling human flesh, the troglodytes quickly deploy to ambush the party as it enters the fog. (The party gets −2 to its surprise roll.)

Troglodytes (5): INT low; AL CE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 2; hp 12, 11 (×3), 8; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/2-5; SA/SD disgusting smell (opponents must save vs. poison or lose 1-6 Strength points for 10 rounds); SZ M (6' tall); XP 120; MM/348. Because they are summoned, these troglodytes never check morale and will vanish when slain.

When Karinza hears the sounds of combat between the troglodytes and the party, she quickly scampers along the ledge until she is in range to cast two *grease* spells on the narrow paths near the landing. She hopes that PCs emerging from the fog will slip and fall into the depression. Karinza then scurries back to the east landing, where she casts *shield, blur,* and *invisibility* spells on herself.

She remains *invisible* and watches the battered party as it emerges from the mist. At an opportune time, she becomes visible by casting a *Melf's minute meteors* spell, targeting spellcasters in the party. Unless the party somehow detects her while she is *invisible*, Karinza should win initiative, and perhaps surprise as well. She then presses the attack, attempting to destroy the party. If reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, Karinza flees to her lair (area 5), grabs her spellbook, *polymorphs* herself into a small bat (using her scroll), and attempts to fly from the cave.

Karinza (drider): INT high; AL CE; AC 3; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 39; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (bite) or by spell or weapon type; SA cast spells as 7th-level wizard, poison bite (save vs. poison at −2 or be paralyzed for 1-2 turns); MR 15%; SZ L (9' tall); ML 14; XP 6,000; MM/112; *drow short sword +2* (destroyed on exposure to sunlight); composite long bow; quiver of 20 *drow arrows +2* (destroyed on exposure to sunlight); wizard scroll with *polymorph self, minor globe of invulnerability,* and *stinking cloud* spells. Karinza's weapons will become nonmagical in 15 days, even if not exposed to direct sunlight.

Karinza has the following spells memorized when the adventure begins: *grease* (×2), *shield, wall of fog; blur, invisibility, Melf's acid arrow; clairvoyance, Melf's minute meteors; monster summoning II.* Additionally, she can use each of the following drow abilities once per day: *dancing lights, darkness, detect magic, faerie fire, know alignment, levitate.*

5. Karinza's Lair.

This little cave reeks of death. Bones, bits of torn clothing, and rotting morsels of flesh are scattered throughout the area. A small fire illuminates the room with dancing orange light. Near the fire, a thick mat of straw has been placed over a carefully arranged pile of bones, forming a grotesque bed. Large stalactites and stalagmites join in two places, forming smooth, hourglass-shaped pillars.

Behind the southern pillar is a large wooden chest; it is neither locked nor trapped. The chest contains 680 cp, 407 sp, and 278 gp in a velvet pouch; a vial of clear syrupy liquid (a potion of *healing*); a vial of thick brown liquid (a potion of *strength*); a wizard's scroll with *grease* and *wall of fog* spells; a jumble of small nonprecious jewelry worth about 100 gp (from halfling victims); and a small felt bag with five gems, worth 500 gp, 250 gp (×3), and 50 gp. If Karinza is killed or has been unable to get to the chest, her spellbook is also there, along with a quill, a few sheets of paper, and some good ink. The spellbook is a small black leather-bound volume. Its pages are made from the dried, stretched skins of Karinza's past victims. This book contains all the spells the drider has memorized, as well as *cantrip, detect magic, read magic, hold portal, web,* and *polymorph self.*

If the PCs scatter Karinza's bed and carefully search through the bones, they can find a *ring of blinking* slipped over a finger bone. Inscribed on the ring are the command words "Wok Firebrand." Anyone knowledgeable about the Far Hills region can tell the PCs that Wok Firebrand is an itinerant wizard who wanders through the area, often in the form of a large gray wolf.

Concluding the Adventure

If Karinza escapes, the party will have an implacable enemy. If she gets away with her spellbook, she will begin attacking the party within days. Her knowledge of the *polymorph self* spell allows her to disguise herself and follow the party into towns. If Karinza loses her spellbook, it may be months before she seeks revenge. Her biggest limitation is her hatefulness, which may at times affect her judgment.

If Edgar survives the adventure without disgracing himself by fleeing a

battle, he will be cured of his arachnophobia. After repeatedly confronting his irrational fear of spiders, he will have finally mastered it, understanding—at some deep, subliminal level—that giant spiders are terrifying but no more so than other fearsome creatures he has encountered in Faerun. Any priests who took particular care to shepherd Edgar through the adventure should split an additional 500 XP. Edgar's main concern now will be to take care of Father Darvin's body.

Edgar asks the adventurers if they know someone who can raise Father Darvin from the dead. Such great acts of faith are beyond the modest powers of Helm's abbot in Tilverton. Edgar will willingly undertake the most hopeless quest to resurrect his friend. He reminds the party that they have to act quickly; Darvin has probably been dead for two days. If the PCs cannot suggest a way to raise Darvin, Edgar asks them to at least help him escort Darvin's body back to Tilverton for honorable burial. Because Helm is severe and hard to please, he has not yet restored Edgar's paladin abilities. Edgar is therefore eager to join any quests that might appease Helm.

If Edgar fled from spiders in terror during the adventure, he waits for the party outside the mouth of Karinza's lair, downcast and ashamed. His fear of giant spiders remains. He gives all his arms and armor to the party and walks back to Tilverton, carrying Darvin's body on his back. When he arrives there, he renounces his faith in Helm, retires from adventuring, and becomes a monk of Ilmater, living out his life in abject poverty. Only extraordinary events can turn him from this self-abasing course.

Finally, the party may attempt to locate the mercurial wizard Wok Firebrand, either out of curiosity or to give him back his *ring of blinking*, which he lost while fleeing a drow patrol under the Far Hills.

Originally a conjurer living in Easting, Wok Firebrand came to view powerful conjuration and summoning spells as an intolerable perversion of the natural order. His revulsion for the consequences of his own spells moved him to seek peace in the tranquility of nature. In time he came to revere Silvanus, eventually becoming a druid. He has not been seen or heard from since he set off to investigate mysterious events in the Wormrot Woods, a small wooded area south of Easting. But that story is for another day. Ω

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page 11), Eliza (#42, page 54), Lucilla Germanicus (#42, page 30), the githzerai Arelisa (#43, page 55), and the reigar Cosette (#45, page 10). These are friendly, powerful (except Martinique), and complex characters.

If in fact there is a "TSR cliche" of the beautiful woman disguising a trap or monster, it's certainly not the fault of DUNGEON Adventures. Most of the authors are not employed by TSR and it has been stated many times that DUNGEON magazine only prints what it receives. If a person wishes to see women (or anyone else) portrayed differently, send for the writers' guidelines and start submitting manuscripts.

John Baichtal
Minneapolis, Minnesota

We Want Grit!

I really enjoyed "Dovedale" in issue #46. It was an excellent introductory adventure for novices to the game, one of the better low-level modules that you've published. However I have one complaint about your low-level adventures. Most are quirky and very "non-gritty." While I realize that the AD&D system makes it difficult for low-level adventures to be dark, brutal, and nasty, it *is* possible. I would like to see darker, more "realistic" low-level adventures.

Richard Lyon
Canton, Georgia

More Grit!

I have noticed a pattern in the content of your magazine I wish to bring to your attention. Your magazine features very few modules for the D&D® game. In addition, the modules of this type you do include are usually lighthearted.

Various authors printed in this magazine have made statements to the effect that the D&D game is not "AD&D Light," yet you portray it as such. Please stop.

I would like to see some grim, bloodthirsty D&D modules. I realize that you can only print what is submitted. Are you really receiving no hardcore D&D adventures worthy of print at all? I'd send you some, but everything I've written turns out to be pure *[expletive deleted by editors]*.

A. J. Sample
Des Moines, Iowa

Discouraged

I am a very discouraged DM whose last adventure was disastrous. My players left in the first third of the game. I couldn't understand it. I knew the adventure by heart, went over the rules dozens of times, but I still failed in the DM's most important duty: to entertain the players. I can't face my players now, and I'm terrified that I can't excel in my only hobby (heck, I can't even do passably).

Now, I admit that I don't have the best players in the world, and the adventure wasn't managed very well (the only player who had an incentive to play was the fighter), but I still should have done better. I knew that the gamers I play with seem bent on not following the story. They are intent on wasting time doing worthless, pointless stuff and then getting bored and blaming me when the story slows to a crawl because I have to create situations to whet their stubborn appetites. Here's a sample:

DM: "Okay, the banquet is over and the other knights go to bed, anticipating a long, strenuous day tomorrow. Do you follow suit?" (Tomorrow is the day when the action gets going and the plot begins to thicken.)

Fighter: "Yeah, I think I'll turn in."

Cleric: "Me, too."

Thief: "I want to go to the temple and steal minty green incense sticks."

Wizard: "I want to seek out that blonde I saw in the mess hall and hit on her."

So you see my plight. Now I have to ignore the sensible fighter and cleric to waste time looking for the blonde and describing the vast temple just so the thief can take some incense sticks. I don't hold it against the wizard, because he was just trying to role-play, and he was the only one who enjoyed the adventure, but my thief was just being stupid. I wanted to grab him by the throat and scream, "Why? Why do you want to do something that stupid?" The wizard was the only one who role-played during the adventure. Everyone else always used the third person approach.

So maybe I ought to get new players, but I still can't DM. I need all the advice I can get from experienced DMs and players alike. Please write to me personally with your thoughts and tips. I really want my players (and myself) to have fun.

Taj Wood
28531 N. Twin Oaks Valley Rd.
Vista, California 92084

Ω

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powerful great wyrms. He can't move, but his magic and innate powers make him extremely devastating to lesser creatures. A description of the full scope of his powers cannot be given here, but guardians of the land are one step above mortals and one step below immortals. Like all guardians, Kagil can't maintain his waking presence very long. After a short time, he must return to his state as a sleeping dragon.

Infernis has been sensing Kagil's growing power since he first discovered the hill and roused the sleeping dragon. At first he was not concerned, for the dracolich's own powers are great. But after a while the sense of power began to overwhelm him. He instinctively realized that Kagil's powers were beyond even his own.

Infernis, dracolich: INT exceptional; AL CE; AC −11; MV 9, fly 30 (C), jump 3; HD 21; hp 145; THAC0 −1; #AT 3; Dmg 1d10/1d10/3d10 (claw/claw/bite); SA +10 damage to all physical attacks; 2d8 hp chilling damage with each hit (save vs. paralyzation or be paralyzed 2d6 rounds); breath weapon once every three combat rounds (damage 20d10+10); SD immune to *charm, fire, sleep, enfeeblement, polymorph, cold, electricity, hold, insanity,* and *death* spells or *symbols*; S 19, D 13, C 14, I 16, W 11, Ch 13; SZ G (160' body, 144' tail); ML 19; XP 23,000; MM/61-62 (dracolich), 68 (red dragon).

Saving throws: DM 3, RSW 5, PP 4, BW 4, Sp 6.

Special abilities: communicate with any intelligent creature, spells and magical abilities at 19th level.

Innate abilities: *affect normal fires* three times per day, *pyrotechnics* three times per day, *heat metal* once per day, *suggestion* once per day, *hypnotism* once per day, *detect gems* three times per day, *undead control* once every three days.

Wizard spells: *magic missile, spider climb*; *darkness 15' radius, mirror image*; *lightning bolt, spectral force*; *magic mirror.*

Priest spell: *pass without trace.*

Concluding the Adventure

If Agoron and Larala fail to destroy the *talon,* Infernis sets his plan to endanger All Clans Island into motion. The results are left to the imagination of the DM.

If the PCs do manage to destroy the *talon,* they receive a story award of 125,000 XP. (See the boxed set for dragon story award guidelines.) This award is in addition to individual monster awards.

> Kagil's voice echoes through the interior of the hill. "Thank you for coming to my aid, grandson," the guardian of the land intones. "You have helped not only this ancient dragon but the entire Council of Wyrms. Be proud, for you have done well. Take from my remaining hoard, for you have earned it. Remember, keep my location secret, but if you have need of me, I will be here."

Kagil allows Agoron to take a total of 25,000 gp worth of treasure from the remains of his hoard. If Agoron asks his ancestor about Infernis and the *talon of final destruction,* Kagil tells his descendant the full story before the guardian of the land returns to sleep. Other questions receive a chuckle and the response, "Some things are best learned by the one who asks the question." If Agoron asks how Kagil became a guardian of the land, the ancient being tells him to "Return when you become a great wyrm, and perhaps I'll tell you the secret." Ω

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